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HOW WARS WERE WON





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# HOW WARS WERE WON

A SHORT STUDY OF  
NAPOLEON'S TIMES

BY

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## PREFACE

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In putting into book form a course of lectures given to the elder half of the Officers' Training Corps at Harrow, I have chiefly kept in mind the requirements of those who are beginning to fit themselves as soldiers—whether they intend to make the Army a career or merely to carry out a Briton's duty of learning enough to be able to help his country, if the need should come. Almost invariably boys prefer *military* History to any other branch of that subject; not because it recounts deeds of heroism and so forth—though people are apt to think this is the reason—but because it is new to them. There is so much of the ordinary ground of history to be gone over that the time for exploration into outlying districts is scanty; and the path is often so trampled and worn as to become monotonous to the ordinary boy. Yet the same boy will attend keenly to intricate details, and even to long explanations of how troops moved and marched, because it is a form of history which is fresh to him, because it gives him an opportunity to think, and because it induces him to believe that he is “learning” instead of “working”. Every teacher knows this.

It is therefore to be hoped that this book, which is intended to set out some main illustrations of the success of the French at the time when they were the great military nation—and the terror—of Europe, the reasons why they were so formidable, and the circumstances in which they failed, may be useful to those who, either at school or elsewhere, are preparing to become soldiers. Military history certainly deserves a higher place than it has hitherto occupied. The study of strategy is not, indeed, the first step in a soldier's training. But there is much to be said in favour of the cultivation of the habit of searching for what it is that makes armies strong and generals victorious.

There is no nation more liable to suffer from a lack of some knowledge of broad facts of military history than our own. Take but two instances of ideas commonly held. The sea has dazzled us: we have been often told that all that is essential to us is sea-power, whereas in fact history of the past and events of to-day show that sea-power alone cannot decide a great war in our favour. It is a defence, and a help, but no more. It may prevent a Continental enemy from invading us, but it does not, *per se*, enable us to subdue him. Again, there is that mischievous belief that in the emergency of sudden invasion we could all spring to arms and fight to save ourselves. If history be consulted it holds out scant hope of success. We might succeed where others have fallen, but it is far more common to fall than to succeed.

Most of us are now willing to admit that as a nation we have been blind to what we ought to have seen. It can only be good for those in whose hands the future rests to realize some of these things; to know that armies cannot in a moment be bought with money, that brave men are not soldiers, and that what is needed is not so much the will to fight as the will to make ready. Nor is it of less importance to understand how difficult it is to make up for lost time, and defeat an enemy who, because he was ready, has the advantage of speed. And these lessons can all be learnt in the history of war.

The maps in the text have been placed as far as possible opposite the narratives to which they belong. But in many cases the narrative extends over more than one page, and in these cases the map concerned has been placed so that the reader will have to turn on. This is generally less inconvenient than turning back.

In conclusion, I must thank Messrs. Blackwood for permission to reprint much of Chapter III from *Blackwood's Magazine*, and Captain F. E. Whitton, of the Leinster Regiment, for an immense amount of kindly and useful criticism on military points where I was apt to go astray.

G. T. W.



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# HOW WARS WERE WON

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## CHAPTER I

### Introductory

“PEACE”, said Ségur, “is the dream of the wise: war is the history of Man.” It is a form of history which is treated often in curious fashion. Many, especially boys, think the descriptions of battles, campaigns, the lives of great captains, and the stories of heroic deeds to be the most interesting part of history. But to the likelihood that lessons must be drawn from these, that war may occur in their own time, and that if it occurs it would have terrible effects, men in England have at many ages been blind. With a wilful blindness they refuse to face the certainty that war will come again in the future as it has come in the past: they are apt to put trust in vague and non-sensical comforts, that “it couldn’t happen: we are too civilized: it would be too terrible”; or, a step farther into the fool’s paradise, “the engines of warfare are now getting so deadly as to make war impossible”. And even when it is upon us, idiots say: “There never was so great a war as this—it must be the last war”. Yet history is

plain: wars come; nations rise by them and fall in them; the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong. And in sight of European nations turning themselves into armies, and in hearing of our soldiers saying "Prepare, prepare", we have paid no heed—not a tenth as much heed as we do to a friend who says: "You're not looking very well to-day". Then we hurry home, rummage in the medicine-cupboard, and send for the doctor.

For the moment, however, we are at last listening to our soldiers; and they, magnanimously refraining from saying "We told you so all along", have been either fighting for us in France, often against almost hopeless odds, or doing their best to make us an army at a moment's notice. Perhaps we may do something ourselves: one of the things—the first thing—is to realize what war means, how the power to make it may save a nation, and how the lack of will to make it may ruin a nation. It is not necessary to dwell on that: it can be read in the events of the day and on every wall, where the urgent appeals to enlist would have been, were it not for our navy, as terrible as the *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, written upon the walls of Babylon: "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting: thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians"—had it not been for the fleet in the North Sea.

The first thing is so to understand war as to be steadfastly determined that our country shall never run this risk again; that, just as men are compelled to insure themselves, they shall be bound to insure their nation; that whether by one plan or another her men shall always be

so trained to war that invasion shall be hopeless. It is easy to think our mind is set on it now: the pinch will come when the war is over, when the cold fit follows the hot, when the bill has to be paid; that is when resolution will be wanted. What will be done? We "chanced it" at the time of the Armada; we "chanced it" against Napoleon. Fortune cannot always be on our side; shall we learn this time?

These are questions of high policy. But there are other things to look to in war which, apprehended rightly, may lead us to take a wiser view of it. The more we understand it the more we shall sympathize with the soldier. We shall learn something of what he has to do, his difficulties, the problems he considers and wants us to realize. Perhaps then we shall not be so glib about the mistakes made when—

"Unlucky captains listless armies led",

nor so foolish as to think that we can always fight for our homes when we wish to do so, nor so incredibly short-sighted as to regard our soldiers merely as men who are ready to die for their country. Of course they are ready; they have proved it again, though the matter was clear beyond proof. But that, as they know and we do not always remember, is not all. Never a truer word than Danton's: "*Il faut mourir pour la patrie; mais il faut mourir utilement*".

War can be studied to the extent we commonly do study it, namely, as a part of the political history of our nation and of other nations: or, again, it may be studied, closely and technically as the soldier does it, as part of



his profession. But between the civilian and the soldier there lies a wide field where something may be done. It is possible to do something to grasp some of the main principles of warfare and the best-known illustrations of them.

The whole study of war has a peculiar interest in history because it is so dramatic. Its decisions are often swift;<sup>1</sup> its consequences so overwhelming; success or failure appears to follow so speedily on a sound resolve or a mistaken step. This offers the student an attractive field for thought, for discussion. He sees—or thinks he sees—where one commander erred and another seized his opportunities. It is quite probable that much of his criticism will be hasty and imperfect: many of the “errors” condemned by him will have been due to difficulties which he has not grasped, some of the “brilliant strokes” partly due to good fortune. But the benefit is gained if he be led to judge, to think, to criticize at all. He will then be striving to understand, and if he once gets to this he will be led to read and to study.

For the truth is, we are little used to war, and what we read of it we read unintelligently. The ordinary history has no space to deal with the problems in any detail; it draws such and such pat conclusions and we accept them unquestioning. And with the newspapers it is also true that a great deal that is given us to read is also unintelligent. For example, we have had the German

<sup>1</sup> The present war, which has already falsified many expectations, seems likely to prove an exception to the inference drawn from recent European wars, namely, that wars were likely to be very short. But it must be remembered that wars which are long to men are short in the life of a nation, and their effects are more swift and striking than the slower results of industrial, commercial, and political changes.

retirement from the neighbourhood of Paris described in posters and newspapers as the "German Rout", whereas it was an orderly retreat, extremely well carried out; we have had various encounters labelled "Decisive Battles", which have decided nothing; we have had reported "losses" of the enemy which total to impossible percentages; and we constantly get "news" reported from newspapers in neutral countries which cannot be well founded, and yet is put before us as if it were official. We shall do something if, in studying war, we only learn to use words in their proper sense, to see events in something of their true proportion, and to estimate evidence with some regard to its probability.

With this general purpose I choose the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, and the first criticism which will be made of this choice is something of this kind. "Those wars were more than a hundred years ago, and the whole art of war has changed since then. Field-artillery was of little power and scanty in proportion to the other arms; the old-fashioned musket was of short range and fired point-blank; there were no machine-guns; there were no railways, no field-telegraphs<sup>1</sup> nor telephones, no air-ships, no aeroplanes—why, these alone have, the newspapers tell us every day, 'profoundly revolutionized' the art of war. Doubtless Napoleon was a great general, and the wars interesting and exciting, but cannot you find something a little more 'up-to-date'?" Doubtless something more recent could be found; but would it be more "up-to-date"—better fitted, that is to say, for the purpose of using the past to explain the present?

<sup>1</sup> The old semaphore signalling was efficient enough, but there was very little of it.

Take two well-known sayings, both by soldiers whose authority no one would dream of questioning. "The Art of War", says one, "consists in making the best practical use of the means at hand for the attainment of the object in view." Says the other: "Read and re-read the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, Eugène, and Frederick; take them for your model; that is the only way of becoming a great captain, to obtain the secrets of the art of war". To make "the best practical use of the means at hand"—in other words, to use your power—and to study the campaigns of great captains—these are the things. To know *how* to do it; that is the point. The first soldier is Von Moltke; the second extract obviously betrays its writer. No one who knew his name could have left him out of the list of great captains. It must be later than Frederick the Great. No one but Napoleon himself could have written it.

He then has no hesitation about the value of the past: if he bids men study the campaigns of Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Cæsar, Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, Eugène, and Frederick, may we not supply the name which his (unaccustomed) modesty forbade him to add, and say: "and of Napoleon"?

And, after all, there is nothing to be surprised at in his words. To say that new methods of disabling and killing men "revolutionize the art of war" is nonsense. Men kill, or are killed, at greater distances; better means of transport enable men to bring up bigger guns, and science has given us stronger explosives; railways bring more things and more quickly than wagons, and so enable nations



to put much larger armies in the field; field-telegraphs and telephones carry news more rapidly; aeroplanes make it easier to know what the purpose of each side is. But the old facts remain; "death is still the ultimate factor, the distance at which it meets a man matters nothing"; men die or fight again; they eat or starve; they do what they are told or they shrink from it; commanders find out about their enemy or fail; and the main point still is that to win you must defeat your enemy's army, and you can only do it by being superior to him at the decisive point. As in the days of Hannibal, there are still decisive points, and you may still be superior in more than one way: numerically is one, physically is another, morally is the third. You may win because you have more men, or because your men are better armed and better equipped to destroy, or because you have established in the enemy's mind the belief that he is going to be beaten. If we could call back Alexander the Great he would tell us all about these last two superiorities; having them he did not need the other.

More in detail, see what some of these main features of war are:—

1. The value of numbers.
2. The value of fighting quality in men.
3. The influence and use of fortresses.
4. The value of a central position.
5. Natural obstacles.
6. The importance of lines of communication.
7. The importance of speed.
8. The true objective of a commander.
9. The value of sea-power *to a military nation*.

Every one of these was clear in Napoleon's time as it is now. Napoleon and the men who fought with him are not "back-numbers".

Even if this be so, it is still possible to urge that it would be better to take something more recent. If all war teaches much the same lessons of strategy and what is called grand tactics—the tactics of a commander in the field—then the latest must surely be the best. There is some force in this. Let us review what the choice is. There is the Crimean War, the war of France and Sardinia against Italy in 1859, the War of Secession in America, 1861–5, the Seven Weeks' War of 1866, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, and the recent struggle between Turkey and the Balkan States. Everyone of them has its interest, and it may be added its peculiar difficulties. But one thing is common to them all. They are all either duels, or confined in the main to one locality.<sup>1</sup> To get any parallel to the present war—to find a world convulsion—we must go back to Napoleon, and the wars of that time give us so much, so much that is still true, so much that was novel then but has remained apt to-day.

Let us sum up a few of these things.

1st. We have the whole of Napoleon's strategy: the strategy of the greatest genius for war that the world has ever seen. The time of it is distant enough for it to be plain: we can see it as a whole; many doubts and obscurities have been cleared up. On the other hand, it

<sup>1</sup> The War of Secession, of course, covered an enormous extent of country, and consisted of many widespread operations. In it sea-power was of much importance, and it was or still more consequence in the Russo-Japanese War.

is not too distant; the fighting was of the same nature as to-day, though our weapons have become more accurate. We are not going back to the epoch of bows and arrows or of armour.

2nd. In these wars a nation stood up and challenged Europe, became a great military power, and for twenty-three years held its ground—an alarming fact.

3rd. Its methods were those of to-day. It made Europe familiar with conscription—with the idea of *a nation in arms*, and, as an offshoot, with the short-service compulsory army. In a word, with the “modern army” as opposed to the “eighteenth-century army”. Only one European nation has not followed its lead—England.

4th. These wars were maintained by the French on a new principle, the plan of making “war support war”. Seventeenth-century armies had pillaged; eighteenth-century armies generally paid for what they took; Napoleon's armies lived in a systematic way on the countries they occupied. The practice of “indemnity” and “requisition” appear. We have heard much of them lately.

5th. The downfall of this military nation came, at length, partly because it came in conflict with the force of nationality among the peoples it conquered. War, and the sufferings which it brought with it, made the French armies hated all over Europe. Peoples who had hitherto been lethargic grew to be fierce patriots, ready to fight for their country. As this force of *nationality*, of patriotism, grew in the victims, it declined in the great military oppressor, whose people grew tired of the sacrifice they had to make in order to keep their ascendancy. Time was on the side of the many—it is so now.



6th. The one steadfast opponent of the military nation (France) was England. For ten years it was threatened with invasion, but the navy kept it safe. Its efforts on land were at first inconsiderable, yet, in the end, by the right use of its sea power *to carry soldiers where they were wanted* it was able to wear down the military nation, and by using the sea as a base to employ its soldiers to the best effect.

Observe how closely these things touch us to-day, though the example lies a hundred years back. From no other wars or groups of wars could such apt illustration be drawn.

A study, then, of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars is not out of place to-day. What we may study is mainly strategy—what a commander does out of sight of his enemy—the problems, that is to say, of making war, of placing your army in a position to beat the enemy, and so of imposing the will of your nation upon his, or of resisting his efforts to impose his will upon yours. This will mean the study of campaigns rather than of battles. In the main the story of battles is the story of *minor* tactics—how men moved, fired, or charged, stood fast, retreated, or made counter-strokes—and minor tactics change rapidly with every change of weapons. To study minor tactics you must study the most recent wars. All others are out of date, and even the latest examples often lead to untrustworthy conclusions. For example, what the French learned in the Crimean War, in the campaign in Italy in 1859, and in their fighting in Algeria, proved of little use in 1870; and the modern power and rapidity of fire, of artillery,

rifles, and machine guns in the present war, have falsified many ideas based on experience of the past. Battles, of course, are always profoundly interesting; only it should be remembered that in reading military history battles are sometimes the least important part. What is vital is what led up to them: a good many great battles were won before they were fought.

ILLUSTRATIONS, FROM THE NAPOLEONIC WARS,  
OF THE POINTS ON PAGE 15

1. *Numbers*: Bavaria, 1805; Prussia, 1806; East of France, 1814.
2. *Fighting Quality*: 14th Oct., 1806 (not Jena); Talavera, Albuera, Barossa.
3. *Fortresses*: Italy, 1796; Andalusia, 1809-12; Spain, 1811-2; the Elbe and Oder, 1806 and 1813.
4. *Central Position*: Italy, 1796.
5. *Natural Obstacles*: Italy, 1800; Austria, 1809; Portugal, 1810.
6. *Lines of Communication*: Italy, 1800; Spain, 1808 (Dec.); Russia, 1812; Spain, 1813.
7. *Speed*: France, 1792; Italy, 1796; Bavaria, 1805.
8. *Objective*: Italy, 1796; Austria, 1805; Portugal, 1810.
9. *Sea Power*: Aug. 1805; Portugal, 1810; Spain, 1813.

## CHAPTER II

### Outlines

BEFORE going into details it is well to have some idea of the Revolutionary and the Napoleonic wars as a whole. The dividing-line between them is usually set at the Treaty of Amiens (1802), when, after ten years of warfare, Europe had one uneasy year of peace. Roughly speaking there are two periods of about the same length, but of different character. In the *Revolutionary* half France was still a republic, and fighting nominally for *her right to exist as a republic*; but she had soon turned defence into offence, and had become a sort of crusading nation (in her own eyes) struggling for the rights of "peoples" against "kings", for those principles of "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality" which were the watchwords of the Revolution. It is clear that this was an attractive political cry. To kings and nobles, indeed, such ideas were hateful. In their view the success of these French doctrines meant the coming of a revolution to their own palaces and castles, the setting up of guillotines, the downfall of everything they valued, including, perhaps, their heads. But their peoples thought otherwise; to them "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality" were alluring; they had often little to lose and much to gain. Thus there was no popular



resistance to the Revolution at first, for the peoples were half-hearted in the fight. Belgium, Holland, Italy, and a great part of Germany were not hostile to the ideas of the Revolution; they were fairly well disposed to the French, it was only their rulers who feared them. This explains much of the early successes of the French; they were often welcome—by the *peoples*; “Kings with their armies did flee and were discomfited”—true, but it was no great matter, and meantime they of the household might divide the spoil.

In the second period France had become an empire, under a military despot—Napoleon. It still professed some of its republican principles of liberty,<sup>1</sup> but in practice it had become a conqueror. It was, of course, no longer popular in the countries it conquered, but it prevailed because its leader was a matchless soldier, and its army the best fighting instrument of the day. Most of this army, however, was destroyed in 1812, and—as has been noticed—a new spirit of patriotism and nationality was growing against Napoleon. France, too, was exhausted. So in the end he fell.

Broadly, then, the wars of the first half were Revolutionary wars fought for existence (or for the cause of liberty as understood by the Revolution); the second half was made up of Napoleonic wars, or wars of conquest. But the line cannot be drawn sharply; the old ideas were still put forward in the second half, and Napoleon himself played a great part in the first half.

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon's intentions if he had captured London were these—“I would have proclaimed a Republic, the abolition of the nobility, and the House of Peers . . . liberty, equality, and sovereignty of the people”. The same thing may be noticed on the coins called “Napoleons”. Down to 1807 the obverse is Napoléon Empereur, the reverse “République Française”.

Further, we can make some subdivisions in each.

The Revolutionary wars divide into two parts, and the Napoleonic period into three—each fairly clearly marked.

The first period of the *Revolutionary wars* stretched from 1792 to 1795. It witnessed the attempt of Austria and Prussia to crush the Revolution by the invasion of France, which was checked at Valmy (September, 1792), but was renewed in 1793 with the help of England, Holland, Spain, and Piedmont, and was within a very little of success. It saw Revolutionary France spring to arms, defend herself, throw off her assailants, invade their territories, win her first decisive battle on foreign soil (Fleurus, June, 1794), overrun Belgium and Holland, and drive her foes across the Rhine. The first coalition broke up. Austria and England were left to go on with the war alone. This is the real period of "crusading France", and after two moments of acute danger it saw the Revolution triumphant. We may call it *From the Defensive to the Counter-offensive*.

In the second period of the Revolutionary wars (1796-1801) the young Napoleon steps on the scene, and dominates it more and more. It saw his first campaign in Italy (1796) and the battles of Arcola and Rivoli, and his second campaign of 1800 (Marengo, June, 1800) which cleared Italy of the Austrians a second time; this was capped by Moreau's great victory of Hohenlinden (December, 1800). But between the two lay a period of comparative failure. Austria again found allies; Russia came in; the Revolutionary armies were beaten out of Italy and fared ill on the Rhine. This period of failure

was the time while Napoleon was in Egypt and Syria. Thus we have a sort of sandwich—two slices of Napoleonic success, one slice of failure. We may call the whole *The Young Napoleon, 1796-1801*.

The Napoleonic wars began with the projected invasion of England (1803-5)—a plan which went under finally at Trafalgar.

The second Napoleonic period (1805-9) is made up of four brief wars. One after another Napoleon overthrew his enemies with amazing swiftness: Austria and Russia in 1805 (Ulm and Austerlitz), Prussia in 1806 (Jena), Russia in 1807 (Friedland), Austria again in 1809 (Wagram). These whirlwind victories left Napoleon at the summit of his power. Belgium, Holland, Italy, and Westphalia (Western Germany) had all passed into his hands. Russia was his ally, Prussia his subject, and Austria compelled to give him an Austrian princess as wife. With the help of his *Grande Armée* he was the *Military Despot of Europe*.

Then came the *Decline*; and the first stage of it began with the attempt to add other kingdoms to the sheaf already in his hand—with the attack on Portugal and the seizure of the crown of Spain (1807-8). It was in Spain that he first met that sort of furious patriotism which refused to be conquered, and because Spain is so barren and so mountainous he could not subdue it. Here, too, England came in: our army in Portugal provided a backbone to the Spanish resistance, and this constant strife went on gnawing its way into Napoleon's army. We cannot find a better name for it than Napoleon's own, "The Running Sore". Yet, till something else happened,

the Spanish business was rather annoying than dangerous. The downfall really began with the Russian campaign of 1812 which had destroyed the *Grande Armée*. It was followed by an outbreak of national feeling all over Europe, the uprising first of Prussia, then of Austria, the German States, and Sweden, the battle of Leipzig (1813) called the "battle of the Nations", and the final defensive campaign of 1814. The abdication of Fontainebleau followed; Waterloo was the epilogue. We call the years 1812-5 *The Downfall*.

Set out in form of a table it stands thus:—

A. THE REVOLUTIONARY WARS (1792-1802): "NEW IDEAS  
AGAINST OLD KINGS"—

1. From the Defensive to the Counter-offensive: The First Coalition (1792-5): Valmy (1792); Fleurus (1794).
2. The Young Napoleon:
  - (a) First Italian Campaign: Arcola (1796); Rivoli, (1797).
  - (b) The Second Coalition (1798-9).
  - (c) Second Italian Campaign, Marengo (June): and Hohenlinden (Dec., 1800).

B. THE NAPOLEONIC WARS (1803-15): "EUROPEAN CON-  
QUEST"—

1. The Attack on England (1803-5): Trafalgar (1805).
2. Napoleon the Military Despot of Europe:
  - (a) Austria and Russia (1805): Ulm and Austerlitz.
  - (b) Prussia (1806): Jena.
  - (c) Russia (1807): Friedland.
  - (d) Austria (1809): Wagram.
3. The Downfall; the Spirit of Nationality:
  - (a) Spain and Portugal (1808-14).
  - (b) The Russian Campaign (1812).



(c) The Uprising in Germany (1813): Leipzig.

(d) The Defensive Campaign (1814).

4. The Epilogue: Waterloo (1815).

Remark once more that there were twenty-three years of it; that French troops entered the capital of every country on the Continent save Turkey, Denmark, Norway, Sweden. It is an amazing list: Rome, Vienna, Madrid, Lisbon, Brussels, The Hague, Moscow, Berne, Dresden, Munich, Milan, Venice, Turin, Naples, Warsaw, and Berlin; but, at the end, what we may in a sense call *Freedom*<sup>1</sup> (in so far as it was the opponent of military despotism) won the day.

The first impression we are apt to receive is that for nearly a quarter of a century Europe battled with the Revolution and Napoleon, was overthrown again, and again, and again, but was in the end victorious. This, however, is a mistake; it is not so. Let us look more closely.

The mistake arises from our usual habit of surveying all European history through British spectacles. The argument is something of this kind. We were at war with France for twenty-two years; Europe joined with us to pull down Napoleon; therefore Europe was with us all the time.

Now for the facts and dates (disregarding the Waterloo campaign).

1. *England* went to war in 1793, and remained at war

<sup>1</sup>One must be careful about this. The French at the beginning were the champions of freedom, and the crowned heads of Europe the supporters of the old despotism. But under Napoleon the French "freedom" turned into a military despotism, and the kings, his enemies, fought for the mass of nations against the one. Yet they were not supporters of political *liberty*; they as kings wanted to restore the old despotic system of the eighteenth century. In this sense Waterloo was a victory for autocracy as against democracy.

till 1802; began again in 1803 and went on till 1814: twenty-one years with one short gap.

2. The next most constant was *Austria*. She fought from 1792 till 1797, from 1798 till 1801, in 1805, in 1809, and from 1813 to 1814: in all *five* wars, the first two nearly continuous; then two very brief five-month wars in a period of twelve years of peace: in all about thirteen years of warfare.

3. *Prussia* did much less. She fought from 1792 till 1794; then not again till 1806, when she was crumpled up by the lightning stroke of Jena; she kept up a sort of feeble wriggle till 1807; then again 1813-4. Three wars; scarcely six years.

4. *Russia* did about the same: a year's fighting in 1799, another short time in 1805, another in 1806-7; then she took the matter in earnest and went on from 1812 to the end: four wars; rather more than six years.

5. *Spain* fought from 1793 till 1795, then was either at peace or on Napoleon's side till 1808. She began again in 1808 and continued till 1814.

We might continue with some of the German Powers and Sweden and Holland, but it would only add to the despair which this leaden mass of undigested dates produces. They are bewildering and profoundly dull in their present shape; let us set them out in another and more useful form.

Here we can see the whole thing at a glance, and we can correct the mistaken notions we are apt to have.

1. We are apt to have an impression that all Europe was at war all the time. This is not true.

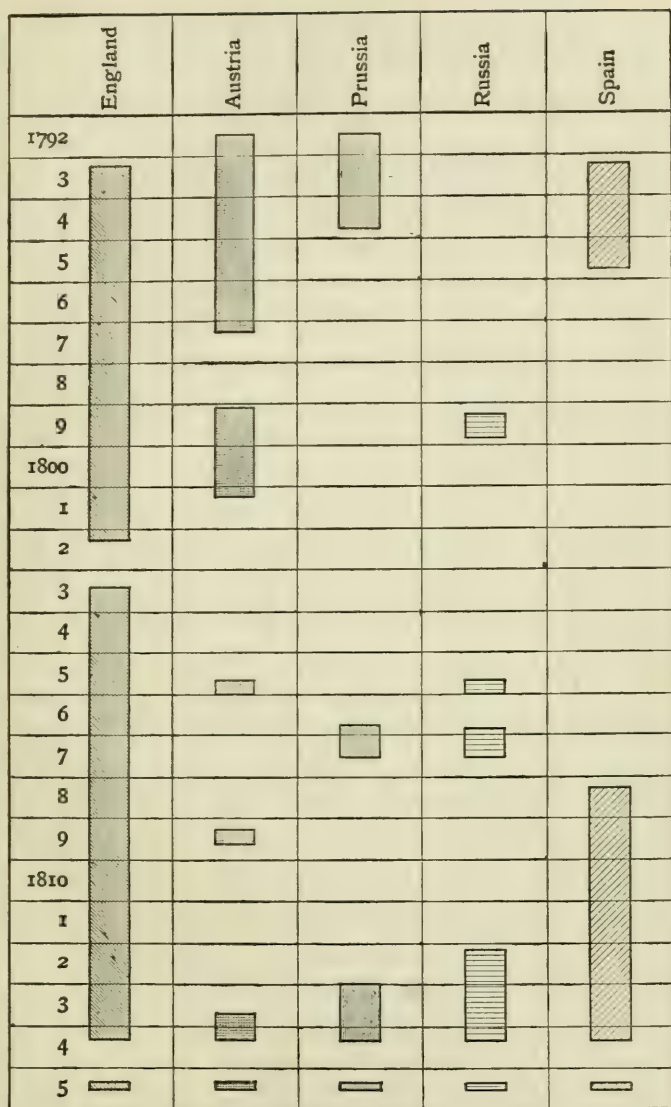


Table of Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

2. We are apt to think that repeatedly all the European nations had tried to crush Napoleon and failed. This is not true either. When they did try they beat him at once.

3. Dazzled by Napoleon's genius we are apt to suppose that he would have been as successful in Spain as elsewhere if he had had the leisure to go there and give his mind to it. This is not true either. He had the leisure; but he only went once—in the winter of 1808.

4. We have the idea that sea-power is decisive; it is not. The war went on for ten years after Trafalgar. It was not till eight years after Trafalgar that we won a really decisive success in Spain.

Now for facts; things that are true. Remark first that Napoleon never fought a long war till he began the war in Spain and the European series starting in 1812; *and he lost them both*. His wars were mostly very short. Why? To say that it was because he won so quickly is no answer. No doubt they were short partly because he was so brilliant a general, and especially because no man ever knew better how to pursue and thereby reap the fruits of a victory. But there were many other reasons. His early campaigns were short because he was fighting against kings and their armies and not against peoples. When the army against him was beaten all was over. He had no popular risings to deal with. Indeed, popular feeling was often on his side. Again, even when he and the French were revealed as oppressors and not liberators, he had too strong an army to be easily beaten. And when at the end he was beaten, it was not his *Grande Armée* which was beaten. That was never



beaten: it perished in the retreat from Russia. The armies which failed him in 1813 were raw levies, not *les vieux moustaches* who had been so long invincible.

In a word, his wars were short because he commonly had every sort of superiority—numerical, physical, and moral—on his side.

Out of this mass of soldiering, which for so long trampled Europe east and west and north and south, one could pick typical things, illustrations of enveloping movements, of strokes at an enemy's communications, of outflanking attacks, of operations from divergent bases, of the value of interior lines, of army formation and organization, of concentration, of the influence of mountain chains and rivers upon warfare, and so on, things which, though the ways of dealing with them have changed, yet remain themselves of prime importance in war. This would have made rather a collection of odds and ends, with little to tie it together. We want first a connecting-string—some main idea.

It will be noticed that practically all the matters mentioned in the last paragraph hang upon the question of *speed*. Outflanking or enveloping an enemy is largely a matter of being quicker than he is; interior lines are valuable because they give that speed; mountains and rivers are difficulties because they reduce speed; and all army organization aims at securing speed. Even lack of numbers may be made up for by speed, by collecting men at the decisive point more rapidly than the enemy can. Now this virtue of speed was peculiarly a quality of Napoleon's. We will therefore keep *speed* mainly before us, and therefore, after seeing how the army of the

Revolution was hammered together, we will take our chief illustrations from the years 1805 and 1806, for those two campaigns in Germany show Napoleon on the grand scale, at his best in the matter of speed. Perhaps he was as quick in 1796 in Italy, but then he was only General Bonaparte, with 40,000 men, instead of being the Emperor, at the head of 200,000. That will lead to some explanation of how the French secured this efficiency in war which made them so formidable, and how the Austrians and Prussians fell short of it. Then we will move to Spain—where, as is well known, the French failed—and trace how in the conditions of war there they lost the advantages which they had enjoyed in Germany.

First, then, for the army of the Revolution. This has a singular interest at the moment, because we picture it as the outstanding example of an army made in a hurry at the time of its country's need, and we may join what there is to be said of it with some examination of the way in which other countries have faced this same problem of army-making.

## CHAPTER III

### Army-making in a Hurry

THE first essential of speed in war is to be ready at the beginning. If we are as ready to begin as our antagonist, nothing is lost; if we can start more quickly than he, much is gained; if he is able to start first, it will be hard to pick up lost ground—it may even be impossible. Readiness for war cannot be said to be a British characteristic. We have begun most of our wars by having to add largely to our army; but we have never had to make it, or remake it, entirely, *and use what we made*<sup>1</sup>. That good fortune is due to the sea—and the navy. One result is that we do not realize fully either the disasters of being without an army or the worst difficulties of having to make one in a hurry. But this business of army-making in a hurry—which some politicians have assumed to be the state of things we ought to accept as proper for us at the beginning of any great war when the enemy threatens to invade—is not a British monopoly. Other nations have had to do it also, either in some emergency or after some woeful disaster which has left them without an army. Their position is certainly

<sup>1</sup> If France had invaded us during the early part of the Seven Years' War, or during the American War, she would have caught us almost denuded of regulars; the army gathered to resist the Armada was quite raw. Fortunately, these soldiers were not called on to fight.

worse, for they have no fleet to shelter them; the invader will be on the frontier or over it at once; the time will be shorter, and the need greater.

The best-known example of hasty army-making in an emergency is that of France at the outbreak of the Revolutionary wars. This is worth particular study for our purpose, not only because France's need was desperate, but because the army which she made served as the model of all European armies of to-day. Further, it saved the Revolutionary Government and it became the weapon which Napoleon wielded with such amazing results. Yet, lest the success of this improvised army (if it was improvised) should lead us to think that armies made in hurry are usually successful, we may look at some other cases.

These are commonly accepted as bearing on the point:—

The case of Prussia in 1813, when she declared against Napoleon.

The case of the United States in 1861, on the outbreak of the War of Secession.

The case of France in 1870 after the surrenders of Sedan and Metz.

Taking these four cases, France in 1792, Prussia in 1813, the United States in 1861, and France in 1870, let us see what is the general impression about them, and, later, examine a little more closely to gather how far that general impression is justified by facts.

1. *France at the Time of the Revolution.*—At the beginning of the Revolutionary wars France was attacked by Austria and the German States commonly comprised in one title—the Empire—by Prussia, by Piedmont, and



a little later by Spain and by England. That is to say, every frontier was hostile except her Swiss border. From Belgium along the Meuse and up the Rhine, across the Western Alps, along the Pyrenees, and all her sea-coast was menaced. Of her assailants Austria had the largest European army of the time, and Prussia's was thought to be the best. The army of France, on the other hand, was broken by fierce quarrels between royalist and republican, mutinous and ill-disciplined. Yet she was able to check the invaders at Valmy in 1792, to create army after army, till they reached the total of thirteen,<sup>1</sup> to overrun Belgium, subdue Holland, drive off all invaders, and cross the Rhine. In 1794 her forces were victorious everywhere—except at sea.

These million soldiers who came to aid the regular army were raised in three ways: (*a*) by volunteers, (*b*) by the so-called *levée en masse*, (*c*) by requisition—or, in other words, by conscription. And their efforts were brilliantly successful. Here then is, or appears to be, an instance where a nation, threatened for its life, springs to arms, improvises armies, and those armies are victorious.

2. The next case is that of Prussia. After the battle of Jena in 1806, and the downfall that followed it, Prussia had hardly a soldier left. In company with Russia she went on with the war till June, 1807; but when Napoleon and Alexander of Russia came to terms at the Treaty of Tilsit, in 1807, Prussia had to accept what terms she could get. Besides losing territory, she had to submit to the condition that her army was not to exceed 43,000 men.

<sup>1</sup> Two of them only existed on paper; but two paper armies may have a use if the other eleven are efficient.

In no part of Europe was Napoleon more hated than in Prussia, and consequently, after the Grand Army had perished in Russia, in 1812, Prussia was the first to revolt against her French oppressor. Once again it seems as if a nation arises armed from the earth. In the campaign of 1813 Prussia was at once able to put 80,000 men into the field. She took a great part in the fighting of 1813, helped to win the great battle of the Nations—Leipzig—and provided over 100,000 men for the invasion of France in the spring of 1814. This, again, has the look of an army largely improvised out of civilians.

3. When the American War of Secession began in April, 1861, the Government of the United States had only 14,000 regular soldiers. In that same month of April 75,000 volunteers were obtained, and in May 42,000 more. In July two calls for half a million each were made. In all, during the war, the North put some 2,600,000 men in the field, and the Southern States gathered 1,100,000; both sides fought with a tenacity rarely equalled in war, and great leaders—Lee, Jackson, Grant, and Sheridan—were not lacking.

4. The business of 1870 bears a different look. After the collapse of the Empire, the Republican Government made gigantic efforts. In all some 1,400,000 men—of sorts—were raised, which vastly outnumbered the German armies, but no permanent success rewarded them. No victory of any importance was won. Paris was not relieved. France had to accept defeat.

It would seem, then, that we have here three cases where attempts to improvise armies have succeeded and one that has failed. It may be interesting to see in what

way success—such as it was—was attained in the earlier cases, and why the last effort was a failure.

Set side by side two pictures. The first is the Argonne in the month of September, 1792. On the one hand the Prussians, under Brunswick, had passed the frontier and its fortresses, with 42,000 men—and Prussian soldiery had still the halo of Frederick's greatness about them. They were to be supported on their right by an Austrian detachment of 20,000, and on the left by an Austrian army moving from Belgium. To face them the French commander Dumouriez had 13,000, and he was able to double this number by calling to him Dillon and Duval. Behind he had 30,000 National Guards at Chalons, but these could hardly be called soldiers. His position looked desperate. He could not hold all the roads through the Argonne: one was already forced. His men were not to be trusted; 10,000 of them under General Chazot had retired in hasty disorder before three Prussian regiments of cavalry. Napoleon himself said that he would not have ventured to fight where Dumouriez did.<sup>1</sup> Still, there was one bright spot—only along the main road could guns be moved in such wet weather as that September provided. Brunswick hesitated; Kellermann and Bournonville came up and raised Dumouriez's force to something over 60,000 men. On the misty morning of September 20th, Kellermann faced the Prussians at Valmy, and an artillery combat began. With that, however, it ended; the Prussian columns formed up for attack never advanced, never even

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Napoleon was, to use a vulgarism, "talking through his hat". He had one good reason to praise Dumouriez: Dumouriez *was dead*, and Napoleon could afford to be generous to dead commanders if not to living rivals. Compare his similar laudation of Sir John Moore.

fired a shot. Neither side budged from its position. The losses were a mere handful. Yet none the less Valmy was long ago placed among the "decisive battles of the world", and recent criticism has not disputed the decision. The Prussians, discouraged, annoyed by the Austrian failure to co-operate, and suffering much from dysentery,<sup>1</sup> fell back—the Republic was saved.<sup>2</sup>

Now for the other side of the picture: this is the work of eighteen months. "Twenty-seven victories, of which 8 were pitched battles; 120 combats; 80,000 enemies *hors de combat*; 91,000 taken prisoners; 116 fortresses or important towns taken, 36 of them after siege or blockade; 230 forts or redoubts carried; 3800 guns, 70,000 muskets, 1900 million pounds of powder, and 90 colours captured." Such were the words of Carnot, at the head of the Ministry for War, rightly called the "Organizer of Victory". He might have added that not an enemy of France remained west of the Rhine.

It is a marvellous change from September, 1792, to the end of 1794, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the period covers more than two years. It is tempting to assume that progress was as uniform as it was brilliant, that the French armies marched from victory to victory; but it was not so. The first half of the year of 1793 saw a complete breakdown. The French invasion of Belgium failed, her troops were driven from the Rhine, everywhere the Austrians were successful, the north of France was invaded, and in August, 1793, the fortresses on the Belgian frontier were falling, the road

<sup>1</sup> They had eaten too many grapes in the Champagne district.

<sup>2</sup> On its birthday: France had, that very day, declared itself a republic.



to Paris being steadily forced, a fierce insurrection going on in La Vendée; the Austrians had reached St. Quentin and Peronne. French armies were only a third of their paper strength, the men out of heart, commanders changing day by day, confusion everywhere. The crisis was more acute than when Brunswick turned back from Valmy. Yet once more the tide ebbed—or, to put it more accurately, the flood was stayed.

If France's improvised army succeeded in 1792, why did it fail in the first half of 1793? What enabled it to regain the mastery? How far is it true to call it an "improvised army"?

Armies win through their own merits and through their enemy's defects. The defects of the Allies in 1792 were strongly marked. Austria and Prussia were the only two that need be seriously reckoned; the others could only make slight diversions in places which could exercise no real force in the war. Even Austria and Prussia were not cordial allies, for they were at odds over the division of Poland. Prussia did not really put her weight into it, and yet she did far more than Austria. And the slowness of even the Prussian movements was wonderful. France declared war on April 20th, 1792; but Prussia and Austria had beforehand determined on the same thing, though they cannot be said to have prepared for it. It was not till the middle of June that the Prussians gathered at Coblenz. They did not enter French territory till July 30th; reached Longwy on August 20th; took it in three days, but dawdled for a week, "digesting the joys of victory"; invested Verdun on the 30th, took that also in three days, and were now

within a day's march of the Argonne defiles. They allowed Dumouriez to hurry across their front to seize them, and did not move till September 12th, when they covered about half a day's march to the Argonne. Recuperating after this effort for five days more, they moved again, got through the defiles, and Valmy was fought on 20th September.

Thus it was five months to a day before the Prussians came in contact with their enemy. Yet their snail-like pace outstripped the Austrians, who were to co-operate on the Meuse. They did not embark on the siege of Lille till September 29th; they failed in it, and withdrew from French territory on October 7th. *Thus the French were given the first requisite in the task of army-making—namely, Time.*

How did France use it?—that is the next question. When war was declared she set on foot four armies: one in Flanders, one in Lorraine, one in Alsace, and one to watch the Rhone and Pyrenees—each of them nominally about 50,000 strong. In reality their numbers were much less. Still, 200,000 men—even on paper—is something, but it does not suggest that enthusiastic and universal arming of the nation which we are apt to suppose. Plainly Dumouriez could have had far more than 60,000 at his back if there had been anything approaching a real rising of the population. The fact is that *he owed his victory in the main to the old regular soldiers of the French Army*; for though this army had been damaged by the Revolution it had not been destroyed.

It is sometimes assumed that the French army on the outbreak of the Revolution was in the main loyal and

not revolutionary in sentiment, but this is obviously untrue. Had it been so perhaps the monarchy would never have fallen. Yet when Mirabeau was endeavouring to moderate the storm he had helped to raise, his chief hope lay in the army. He wished to use it in the last resource against the people, but he found that he could not. It was deeply infected with the ideas of the Revolution. Distinctions, however, can be drawn. The household troops were, of course, loyal: they were recruited from the noblesse. Even the privates were ranked as lieutenants in the regular army, the non-commissioned officers as captains, while the officers were all generals.<sup>1</sup> To be even a private in the Gardes du Corps you had to show sixteen quarterings—unblemished noble descent for four generations. In this stronghold of privilege revolutionary ideas found little sympathy. But the household troops were few. Other parts of the army in the main loyal to the Crown were the foreign regiments, of which there were twenty-three,<sup>2</sup> and the cavalry. For some reason or other cavalry have in general supported monarchy at all times. But the bulk of the infantry *and all the gunners and engineers* were no supporters of the old *régime*.

The truth is that even before the Revolution the army was discontented, ill-disciplined, mutinous. The soldiers resented attempts that had been made by St. Germain to introduce a stricter discipline, which they denounced as "Prussian"; they were ill-paid, ill-fed, and worse housed.<sup>3</sup> In name they were voluntary recruits, but in

<sup>1</sup> The army of Louis XVI had a glut of generals. At one time there were 1295, and even after St. Germain's reform there were 976—a proportion of 1 to every 157 throughout the army.

<sup>2</sup> Including 11 Swiss, 8 German, and 3 Irish.

<sup>3</sup> They got 3d. a day. Often the soldiers had to sleep three in a bed.

fact they were often "crimped" by a system of *racoleurs*, "bringers-in"—a process resembling the working of the press-gang. Their officers were out of touch with them, and they, too, had their grievances, since none, unless he belonged to the nobles, could rise above the rank of captain. When the Revolutionary doctrines of equality began to spread in the army, discipline gave way everywhere. The story of the regiment which mutinied because their officers did not ask them to dinner<sup>1</sup> is only typical of a number: things far worse happened. Bouillé had practically to storm the town of Nancy with some "foreign" troops to suppress its mutinous garrison, and over 400 men were killed and wounded. Little wonder that France's enemies thought that invasion would be child's play. "Do not buy too many horses," said Bischoffswerder to some Prussian officers setting off in 1792; "the comedy will not last long; the army of lawyers will soon be annihilated in Belgium, and we shall be on our road home in the autumn." The last part of his prediction came true.

Yet neither the menace from without nor the hazard from within escaped the eyes of French soldiers. As early as December, 1789, one far-seeing man had hit on a remedy. This was Dubois de Crancé.<sup>2</sup> In a speech in the Constituent Assembly he used these memorable words to press the need of conscription: "I tell you that, in a nation which desires to be free, which is surrounded by powerful neighbours, and harassed by factions, *every citizen ought to be a soldier, and every soldier*

<sup>1</sup> It was the Royal Champagne Regiment.

<sup>2</sup> Later Dubois-Crancé, when *de* became dangerous.



*a citizen*, if France is not to be utterly annihilated”. His ideas found at the time little support. “Liberty” was the cry of the day, and conscription was compulsion. None the less he was listened to later, and from him dates one beginning of the modern European army.

For the time, however, only half of his memorable phrase was accepted. “Every citizen a soldier?” No! But “every soldier a citizen?” Enthusiastically, Yes! and with that the discipline of the army was perishing. Between July and October, 1791, 30,000 men deserted; and a lieutenant of artillery—afterwards famous—took nine months of additional leave (without asking for it), and busied himself intriguing in Corsica.

All these deserters, however, were not in the end lost to the French army, any more than Napoleon. In the fierce heat of political contention men left regiments where their opinions were unpopular: the Royalists<sup>1</sup> left for ever, but the others rejoined, or reappeared in the levies of volunteers of 1791 and 1792, or joined the National Guard. This force, irregular, ill-disciplined, and civilian in character to begin with, claimed in the republican spirit of the time to elect its officers; but it had the wisdom in the main to elect old soldiers, and, having elected them, to obey them sometimes. So once again the stiffening of old soldiers came in useful.

Another point is to be noticed. Much of the old French army was beset with privilege, and offered in the famous phrase “no career to talents”. But there were

<sup>1</sup> Chiefly officers of high grade. France could afford to do without some of the thousand generals.

two branches where privilege did not exist—where the officer who was not noble could rise to high rank. These were the scientific branches, the artillery and the engineers. These were in the main revolutionary in sentiment, and the armies of the Revolution retained their services—much to their profit. The battle of Valmy was entirely an artillery battle,<sup>1</sup> and the French gunners stood to their work. Thus while the Republic was always weak in cavalry<sup>2</sup> *it retained its full strength in artillery*; and to make good gunners in a hurry is far more difficult than to train cavalry or infantry.

How great a part old regulars played in the long series of French victories is displayed in another way. Napoleon had twenty-four marshals. Of these, eight (Kellerman, Berthier, Serrurier, Perignon, Macdonald, Davout, Marmont, Moncey) had served as officers before the Revolution, and nine (Augereau, Jourdan, Massena, Oudinot, Victor, Murat, Bernadotte, Lefebvre, Ney) had been in the ranks of the old army. Add Dumouriez, Pichegru, Hoche, and Napoleon himself, and once more we see how much France owed to the regular soldiers as opposed to the later levies.

Summing this up, it becomes clear that the astonishing victories of revolutionary France were not won by an entirely "improvised" army. There was a stiff leaven of veteran soldiers. These, it is true, had been often

<sup>1</sup> At Jemappes, Dumouriez's other great victory, the French guns, 100 to 50, had much to do with the result. Again, when Dumouriez turned traitor, and tried to take his army over to the Austrians, he half persuaded the line, but the gunners would not hear of it, and as they stood firm the line remained faithful too.

<sup>2</sup> And much later. Not only in 1796 were the French nervous of the Austrian cavalry. Even so late as the campaign of Jena, Napoleon seems to have thought that the Prussian cavalry would outmatch his.

mutinous at home, but enemies are always apt to under-rate the speed with which factions perish and political dissensions cease in the face of an invader.<sup>1</sup> They were, to begin with, unsteady; but if they broke, they came again. What they wanted was time, and, in Bismarck's phrase, to be "shooted a little". They got both in plenty.

Yet if it is necessary to reckon much on the "old-soldier" element which drilled, trained, and offered an example to the new levies, one must also recognize the vigour with which new levies were made into soldiers, especially when at length Carnot, Dubois-Crancé, and the Military Committee really set to work. Of course mistakes were made at first. The first suggestion of 1791 was to use the National Guards in the army, but the National Guard had no stomach for the fight. If they did not wish to go to the front, there was certainly nothing in France capable of compelling them, so on August 17th, 1791, 101,000 volunteers were asked for. They gave in their names freely at first, especially in the threatened north-east, but it was another thing to get them to march. Out of the proposed 169 battalions only 69 were embodied by September 25th, and they were totally out of hand, and plundered wherever they went. Even a year later only 83 were available. They contained some good stuff, however—much better than the second levy of volunteers invited in 1792. But this volunteering completely dried up the supply of recruits to the regular army, as the volunteers were better paid

<sup>1</sup> By 1792 most of the "opposition" (the Royalist party) had gone over to the enemy.

and had all sorts of privileges, subversive of discipline.<sup>1</sup> Again, they were supposed to be kept a force apart; but La Fayette brigaded his with the regulars, and his example was followed everywhere. Otherwise the volunteers were at first comparatively useless.

However, the cry was for more men, and on February 26th, 1793, Dubois-Crancé was at length able to carry his plan of conscription. 300,000 men were looked for, but 164,000 was the yield. Many deserters, careless officials, the favouring of "good" (but timorous) Republicans, and the general dislike of any compulsion accounted for the deficit. As the numbers had fallen short, and French arms were everywhere defeated that summer, a *levée en masse* was proclaimed in August. With some difficulty the saner heads of the time, Danton among them, limited this *levée* to those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. The first products were disastrous—either vast bodies of peasants, bewildered and starving, armed with pitchforks, scythes, and clubs, or the scum of Paris, pillaging and murdering on their way to their stations, red-hot with mutinous patriotism. There were no arms for them, no supplies, and no officers. The Convention did not then realize that what was wanted at the front was not more men, but more soldiers.

Bringing order out of this chaos was the work of the Military Committee under the lead of Carnot and Dubois-Crancé, with the vigour of the terrible Committee of Public Safety behind them. The conscription was system-

<sup>1</sup> For example, they were entitled to go home at the end of each campaign—campaigns being held to end on the 1st of December in each year—if they gave two months' notice to their officers.



atized and made to bear fruit, so that by the end of 1794 over a million men had in all been raised,<sup>1</sup> and 700,000 of them were actually assimilated as soldiers, and in arms. All distinctions between volunteers, National Guard at the front, and regulars were abolished; all became regulars. In 1794 the system of the demi-brigades—grouping one battalion of regulars with four of the new levies—was established by Dubois-Crancé. A regular system of requisition for food was begun. Promotions were made by merit, and incapable or unlucky generals retired.<sup>2</sup> Arms were turned out in huge quantities: nine great factories were set up in Paris, producing 1000 muskets a day. Four enormous forges in the Ardennes made 200,000 guns<sup>3</sup> in a year. Grenelle's improved system of powder-making and Fourcroy's new steel kept the supply of ammunition and bayonets up to the incessant demand. And driving behind was the Committee of Public Safety—the dread of all—with the resources of France, its wealth, its manhood, at their mercy. To the ambitious and intelligent the one career of the day was the army—except politics. And if one came to reckon hazards, perhaps the latter was the more dangerous. So France won through.

2. *Prussia in 1813.*—The Treaty of Tilsit in 1807 robbed Prussia of half her territory, and left her only a population of some 4,500,000 souls, a land ruined by war, and a Government crippled with the task of paying off an enormous war indemnity. Further, lest she should rebuild an army of dangerous size, Napoleon had forced

<sup>1</sup> Including volunteers and the *levée en masse*.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes to the guillotine.

<sup>3</sup> Largely out of church bells.

her<sup>1</sup> to agree to limit her army to 43,000 men, with no increase for ten years. When he went to war with Russia in 1812 he demanded from Prussia the help of a Prussian contingent of 20,000 men—about half her army—and this contingent, under Yorck, surrendered to the Russians on 30th December, 1812. That left Prussia nominally with some 23,000 men.<sup>2</sup> Yet in 1813 she was able to put 80,000 combatants in the field at once, and not only to supply wastage, but to add to her forces. With the help of the Russians she bore the brunt of Napoleon's attack. Though defeated at Lützen and Bautzen, the Prussians fought so tenaciously that Napoleon could not use his victories: he admitted that the Prussians were his most dangerous antagonists, and when the war ran through to Leipzig, Prussian troops had a big share in the Allies' victory.

Thus the "War of Liberation" of 1813 bears the look of a spontaneous rising to arms of a people in defence of their homes. Dr. Julius von Pflugk-Harttung puts it:<sup>3</sup> "This time, however, it was a question, not of kings and officials, but of the soul of a people. The Prussian nation had endured too much under the pitiless hand of the conqueror of Jena, and in the grim school of suffering had acquired a moral force which now revealed itself in its elemental power. The people were resolved to win back their highest possessions, their rights as men and citizens, by desperate combat, if there was no other way. The enthusiasm for freedom and fatherland swept

<sup>1</sup> September 8th, 1808, by the Franco-Prussian Convention.

<sup>2</sup> Of course she recovered Yorck's contingent. His surrender was a put-up job.

<sup>3</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*. Chapter on the War of Liberation.

through the country like a pent-up mountain torrent. All classes, all ages, flew to arms; mere lads and grey-haired patriarchs, even young girls, entered the ranks. Those who could not offer their own lives on the altar of their country gave what they had. In a few weeks the country, impoverished as it was, contributed in free gifts the value of half a million of thalers,<sup>1</sup> and thus lightened—one may even say made possible—the heavy task of the Government.”

Plainly, as an explanation, this is unconvincing. Neither the enthusiasm of “the soul of a people” numbering 4,500,000 nor the free gift of £75,000 would have held Napoleon’s armies. There must have been something else—something great.

Was it that Prussia’s exertions after all counted for little—that Napoleon was overthrown by Russia, Austria, Sweden, and Bavaria, with England finding money, and Prussia merely lending a hand? Doubtless, it is true that Prussia could not have done it alone: the triumph, when it came, was the triumph of the Allies. But Austria, Sweden, and Bavaria did not join till later; Prussia bore the heat of the day; in fact, had not Prussia been able to do so much the Russians would not have advanced to the line of the Elbe, where the matter was decided.

Unquestionably Prussia played a great part, but it did so because her king and statesmen had foreseen the emergency, and in spite of all obstacles *had deliberately prepared for it*. For six years men had been working, and when “the Day” came they were to a great extent ready.

<sup>1</sup> £75,000: about 1s. 6d. per head of the population. Compare it with the Prince of Wales’s Relief Fund. Prussia was very poor.

Much had been done in Prussia between 1807 and 1813. Education had been spread, serfdom abolished, and patriotic ideas taught. All these were good; but of prime importance was what was done to refit the army. Just as France found a man in Dubois-Crancé with a new idea, so Prussia found Scharnhorst. A month after the Treaty of Tilsit he was pressing the need of a small standing army of 65,000, which could be reinforced from a national militia: it was the duty of every man to share in national defence: and, further (this is his great invention), he sketched a plan of "*short service*"—*of passing men quickly through the ranks, and from there into a reserve*.<sup>1</sup> Many reforms in the army were at once made: the "foreigners" (non-Prussian subjects) who had made up a third of the old army were lessened, the force filled with Prussians (no longer, as they had been, chiefly serfs), officers were promoted by merit, and privileges of the nobles restricted. But Napoleon quickly pounced on these schemes, and the Prussian army was restricted to 43,000 men, as has been stated. None the less, Scharnhorst set to work again, and by the Krümpersystem (the Shrinkage System) managed to introduce his plan of short service. The *Krümper*s (supernumerary recruits) passed into squadron or company and out again: the working of the system was kept as secret as possible. Napoleon tried to check it, but in spite of him it went on. Here was the reason why Prussia in 1812, with an army nominally of 43,000 men, had in reality 150,000 men trained to arms. It was these men who stood so stiffly at Lützen and

<sup>1</sup> So between them Dubois-Crancé and Scharnhorst founded the modern Continental army.



Bautzen—not volunteers. The system of *Landwehr* was not organized till March, 1813, and no *Landwehr* were in the field till the second part of the campaign—till after Austria had come in to join. And the immediate response to the call for volunteers was hardly like a “pent-up mountain torrent”. Only 10,000 came forward in the first six months of 1813. Yet Prussia, allowing for those actually with the colours, must have had well over 250,000 men of an age to bear arms. Still smaller was the response of volunteers from other German States: it only amounted to two weak battalions.

Least of all, then, can the case of Prussia be quoted as an illustration of improvising a successful army. The army was not improvised: it had been carefully built up. The nation did not spring to arms at an impulse; wary statesmen had quietly forced it to make ready. Its triumphs were won by regular soldiers. Its volunteers were at first neither useful nor remarkably numerous. Of course they became valuable; they improved, and the volume of them grew with the encouragement of success. Prussia was patriotic, and men filled with fierce patriotism fought their best. But the goodness of that “best” depended, not on their patriotism, but on their previous training to arms. That was the work of Scharnhorst, Stein, Hardenberg, and the King.

3. *The War of Secession.*—The story of the War of the Secession in the United States is often quoted as a justification of the value of volunteer armies hastily got together, but it is singularly ill-adapted to prove anything of the kind. *It only proves the value of volunteers against volunteers*, for the regulars engaged were a mere handful.

Even so, the North, with its huge resources and the ready response to its call for volunteers, could not win with them; it had to have recourse to forced service in the end. That after two or three campaigns volunteers fought as well as regulars would have fought does not prove that they were valuable from the first. Every general on both sides was incessantly hampered by straggling, lack of discipline, and the fact that in presence of the enemy there was little fire-control.<sup>1</sup> Lord Wolseley, after a careful study of the war, gave it as his deliberate opinion that one Army Corps, well found and ready, would have finished the war for either side in the first campaign. If this be so—and it has not been seriously disputed—the “volunteer” army stands condemned every way. Years of bloodshed and thousands of lives might have been saved. Napoleon said: “Quand l’ignorance fait tuer dix hommes là où il n’en devrait pas coûter deux, n’est elle pas responsable du sang des huit autres?” Nations may be ignorant as well as commanders.

4. *France in 1870.*—The circumstances of the war in 1870 are remembered, but not always the dates. Bazaine’s army was surrounded in Metz by the end of August. MacMahon, hemmed in at Sedan, surrendered on September 2nd. So France lost almost all her field troops, and by September 19th the Germans were before Paris. This, of course, had been garrisoned, thus devouring most of the few regulars left. Yet Paris was not France: much of the country was untouched: its resources were enormous: the spirit of patriotism was there, and when

<sup>1</sup> “The line bent like a cow’s horn, each ragged rebel aligning on himself and yelling on his own hook”—thus a Confederate General on his own (veteran) men!

Gambetta escaped from the capital on October 7th there was the man to stir it. Now was the time to improvise an army: it had reasonable chances of success, for what with detachments on the lines of communication, and the armies left to besiege Metz and Strassburg, the Germans had only 147,000 to contain Paris:<sup>1</sup> the enceinte was 50 miles round, and help could be given by a sortie from the numerous garrison within. If France could raise the men, it was now—or never.

The men could be found, and were found. Dispersed through France were 600,000 of the Garde Mobile; behind them the Garde Nationale ready to fight in defence of their own districts, 700,000; more immediately valuable the *régiments de marche*, made up of depot companies of men who had been late in going, or who were untrained or partially trained. One need not reckon the Francs-tireurs under local leaders. But of the rest there was *chair à canon* in plenty. In six weeks Gambetta had created an "army" of 180,000 men at Tours; others were gathering at Lille, at Rouen, at Alençon, at Besançon, with arms and supplies and enthusiasm—but without training.

Through the autumn and winter these armies tried to thrust back the Germans and to relieve Paris, but they never met any success worth counting. The Loire army, 120,000 strong, did for a time push Von der Tann, with 20,000, from Orleans, but they could get no farther. D'Aurelle de Paladines brought 50,000 men against 9000

<sup>1</sup> Here was the tragedy of Bazaine's surrender on October 27th. It set 200,000 men free for Paris. Another fortnight would have been invaluable to the French. Similarly the time gained by sending our men to help to hold Antwerp in 1914—through it was only a few days—was of considerable military value.

Germans at Beaune la Rolande, and, five days later, flung 80,000 against Mecklenburg's far inferior force at Toury. Both attacks failed: it was not for lack of valour. 10,000 French were killed and wounded at Beaune. It was lack of leading, of experience, of training.

It was the same tale with Chanzy, with Faidherbe in the north, with Bourbaki near Belfort, with the vast garrison of Paris under Trochu, 300,000 strong. Everything failed; everything was lost—except honour.

What were the reasons? Not want of men, nor of arms, nor of money, nor of supplies; simply that civilians could not be made at such short notice into soldiers.

"Ask me", said Napoleon, "for anything but Time." The French in '70 were given no time. The Republic began to organize the national resistance directly after Sedan (September 2nd), but by the 19th of that month the Germans were outside Paris. Gambetta gathered his army of the Loire by November 20th, but forced it into fighting a week later. The Germans were too quick; they knew that to wait would give these hasty levies the chance to grow into soldiers. So, in spite of slush and snow and bitter frost, they never gave that chance. They kept their covering armies well pushed out, and if the French levies were to do anything *they had to take the offensive: and they could not do it. They had not the skill to manœuvre.* For once again Napoleon may be quoted. "With a raw army it is possible to carry a formidable position, but not to carry out a plan."

This paralysis in manœuvring was due partly to inexperience, largely to the lack of transport and supply, but principally to the lack of old soldiers. When the



garrison of Paris had been provided, there remained of regular units only these crumbs of an army: twelve battalions of infantry, nine regiments of cavalry, and one single complete battery of guns. Thus there was no stiffening for the new levies; no officers to lead, no non-coms. to drill, and no veterans to steady the raw men, to teach them how to make the best of discomforts, to fend for themselves, to bivouac, to hang on in the face of fire, to rally in case of reverse. There was no one to give confidence, and so the new levies never got confidence. They fought bravely, but, sacrifice their lives as they would, they seemed to get beaten, and henceforth they expected to get beaten.

Thus the new levies had no time, no officers, and no stiffening of old soldiers. Yet there was something else which helped to make a difference between the days of the First Republic and of the Third. It was not the number of men: France found them in each case. It was a change in the nature of war itself. War had become so much more complicated, so much more scientific, so much more difficult, the strain on the *moral* of troops so much more intense, the demand on the intelligence of officers so much greater, the operations on so much wider a field, the central control so much less easy and effective. Compare, for example, the artillery of 1792 with that of 1870: the field-piece of 1792 could be cast with the greatest ease, its carriage made in the simplest fashion, and repaired with any wood, by any wheelwright. Shrapnel was unknown;<sup>1</sup> the business of range-finding rudimentary guess-work; the gunner (and he was the scientific man

<sup>1</sup> First used at Vimiero.

of the service) mostly a rule-of-thumb man. It was not so in 1870. True, artillery had not reached its modern accuracy and range, but it had progressed hugely since 1792, and the shell-fire to which it could subject infantry was infinitely more trying, and this, too, at a range where the soldier could see no prospect of retort. Take, again, the soldier of 1792. He had little to learn in the way of shooting; he never fired on a range; in battle—

“he loaded his primitive firelock as our musketeers had done theirs at Sedgmoor, and, like them, fired it straight to his front at any enemy within 150 yards distance. No long and careful training in attack formations was necessary to teach him to face clouds of shrapnel bullets and the hail of close rifle-fire which the assailant has now to advance through. . . . The regimental officer then had himself little to learn beyond what came naturally to the country gentleman. The tactics were of the simplest sort. Fire discipline was then as unknown as the art of photography, and the officer’s chief duty was to lead his men straight upon the enemy.”<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, is another reason for the failure of the improvised armies of 1870; *the gap between the civilian hastily enlisted and the trained man was so much wider.*

What the past shows would seem to be: (1) that the instances where, in common belief, a people had sprung to arms to save their nation and attained success are very few; (2) that where success has been won it was with a considerable stiffening of regulars; (3) that time is absolutely necessary; (4) that the prospect of success was greatest where the business of war is simplest. On the other hand, warfare has in the last century tended to become shorter, sharper, and more immediately decisive,

<sup>1</sup> Wolseley: *The Decline and Fall of Napoleon.*

the conduct of it more and more technical, and the last attempt of a people in arms was a tragic failure.

On the other hand we must bear in mind the immense success of the hastily-raised armies of the French Revolution—surprising, even when we allow for the stiffening of old regulars. These armies, at once formidable, became for years irresistible; starting from a new beginning, they got rid of some old military trammels, and made the most of new ways and principles which had been overlooked. They made it their principal business to fight, while their opponents were often content to manœuvre. Among the impressions they left upon their victims, perhaps the chief was that of rapidity. They did not hesitate, they seized the offensive, they paid little heed to winter or weather, to elaborate plans of campaign or formal rules. This quality of rough-and-ready warfare was developed by Napoleon to its fullest value.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Campaign of Ulm, 1805

[A map of Central Europe will be found at the end of Chapter VII.]

AN enveloping attack, if successful, is plainly the most decisive operation in war. A successful outflanking movement may lead to the crushing of one part of the enemy's force, and will probably force him to a disastrous retreat; a frontal attack, piercing his centre, breaks up his army, and exposes it to be beaten in detail; but an enveloping attack surrounds him, and by the one operation puts his whole force out of action. Yet, as it is the most deadly, it is the most difficult of attacks for these, among other reasons:—

1. It must be speedy and well masked. Otherwise the exposed force will take alarm and withdraw in time.

2. It usually demands a considerable superiority in numbers; if there is not a superiority the difficulty will be increased.<sup>1</sup>

3. In the process of making it the assailant must divide his forces, spreading them over a wide circle. This exposes them to the risk of being attacked and beaten in detail. If one or two "stops" are beaten, the force which it is intended to surround will slip through. The failure of one may involve the failure of all.

<sup>1</sup> The Japanese succeeded at Liao-yang and Mukden by envelopment, though they were greatly inferior in number to their opponent.



4. It entails punctual co-operation among many bodies widely severed. This is extremely difficult to attain.

To illustrate enveloping attacks we will take one that was a success and another that failed. For the success the example shall be Napoleon's attack upon Mack at Ulm in 1805. For the failure we must seek an earlier example, and go back to 1794, when Coburg endeavoured to surround Souham at Tourcoing.

*The Situation on the Outbreak of War in 1805.*—The French dominions in 1805 nowhere touched the Austrian except (1) on the Rhine just below Basel and (2) at the eastern end of Italy, where the Austrian Venice joined the Italian kingdom which Napoleon had just created for himself. When war was declared, Napoleon's Grand Army was mostly on the coasts of the Channel, ready for the invasion of England. Thus the initiative—the power of striking first—lay with the Austrians.

Let us first see what seemed possible to both sides, what likely for the other to do, and then come on to the steps each took.<sup>1</sup>

Austria would be liable to be attacked, or could attack, in two places, (1) in Italy or (2) on the Danube. Assuming, as the Austrians did—most people do at the beginning of a war—that they were going to win, it was open to them either to attack France in or through Italy, or up the Danube and from there to the Rhine. Which would be the *decisive* theatre of operations?

To get into Italy, Austrian forces would have to traverse the eastern mountains, through Tyrol or the

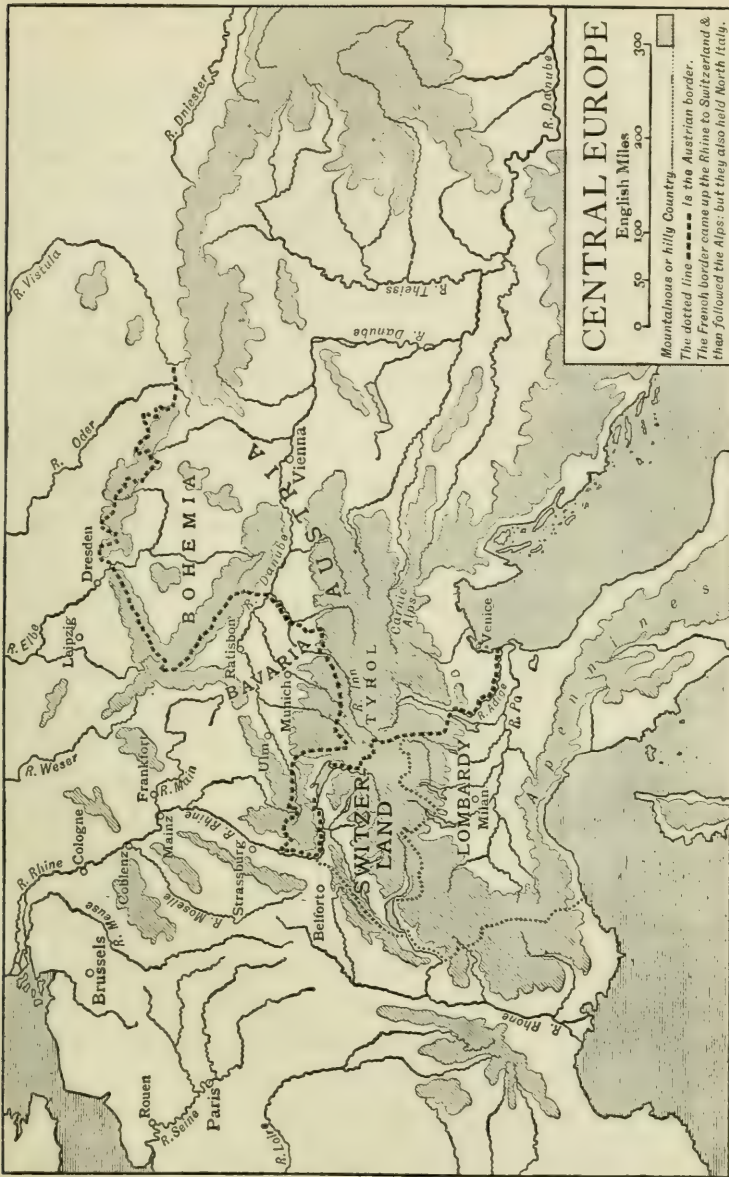
<sup>1</sup> Map, p. 59.

Carnic Alps; that was all in their hands. If they beat the French out of Italy they would then have to cross the western Alps or the Apennines before they could invade France. Their communications with Austria would then run over two mountain chains, the second one high and difficult. Further, no invasion of France from the southwest has thriven. Even Eugène had failed over it. The Austrians knew this: Eugène was in Austrian service.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it might be assumed that the Austrians would make Italy a secondary theatre of operations. But other things influenced them. (1) They expected that Napoleon would prefer to make Italy his chief theatre of operations *because he had done so before*. In 1796 he had cleared the Austrians out of Italy and invaded Austria over the eastern Alps; in 1800 he had won his great campaign of Marengo. Surely he would choose the scene of his former success. (2) The Austrians had possessed Lombardy (the centre of north Italy) before the French drove them out of it in 1796, and they wished to retain it. For this reason they (as we shall see) intended to make Italy the chief theatre: they put their biggest army of 100,000 men under the Archduke Charles in what had been the territory of Venice to reconquer Lombardy.

Observe that this was letting political considerations interfere with military ones. The right thing for a Government to say to its soldier-commanders is this: "We are at war. Beat the enemy's army; then, when that is done, we shall be able to get what terms we want". What the Austrian Government said was: "We want you to beat the enemy—and to reconquer

<sup>1</sup> But Mack forgot Marlborough's march of 1704.



Lombardy". But that is—or may be—tying the hands of the soldiers: they may see that Lombardy is not the place where the enemy can be decisively beaten, and in striving to reconquer Lombardy they may expose themselves to be beaten decisively elsewhere; then they will lose everything.

Yet with their eyes chiefly on Italy, Austria could not neglect the Danube, because that is the easy road to Vienna. They would wish to protect their own land from invasion. To do it they relied on their other army, under Mack, 80,000 strong, and on their allies, the Russians. But, as was natural, the Russians were still far off; time was needed for them to get up. Here, again, politics came in to hamper and spoil Austrian plans. Vienna must be protected from a French attack; therefore Mack's army must be pushed forward to keep the French at a long distance from it till the Russians could come up. Once again a faulty military plan was adopted for political reasons. Having said to the Archduke Charles: "Reconquer Lombardy", the Aulic Council at Vienna said to Mack: "Advance through Bavaria and keep the French off Vienna and Austrian territory till the Russians join you". The end will show how, by striving after these political aims and neglecting the first military duty of gathering all their forces to beat the enemy's chief army, Austria got none of them. She did not regain Lombardy; Vienna was not covered; the Russians did not get up to join Mack.

Now look with Napoleon's eyes. Was it to be Italy or the Danube? Twice it had been Italy, and no one realized better than Napoleon the moral value on his



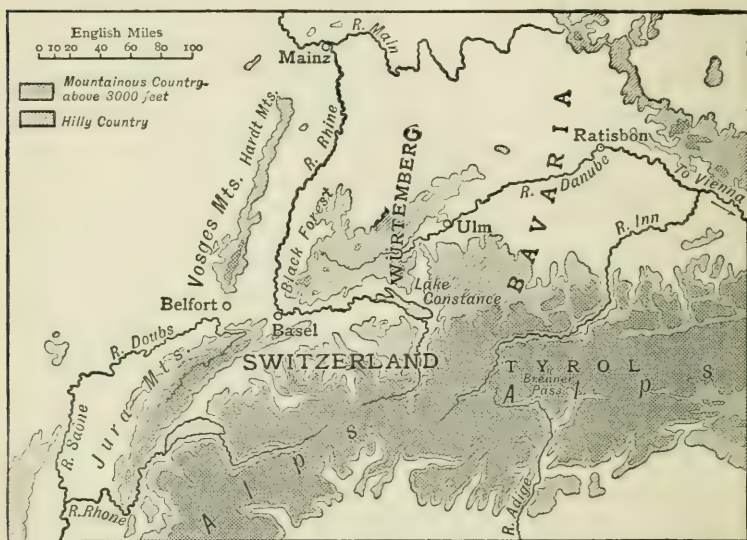
soldiers of revisiting fields of past glory. Of course Napoleon would feel that he could beat them in Italy as in 1796 and in 1800; but there were serious difficulties. His communications would be over one mountain range, and over two if he invaded Austria from there; and supposing he did beat the Archduke's army, he would drive it back on Vienna and on the advancing Russians. Mack's army of the Danube would join it. *Thus he would compel his enemies to make the very concentration which they were neglecting to make.*

Further considerations would occur to him. The Austrians would expect him in Italy, which was to his mind an excellent reason for not going there. Again, it was much farther from the English Channel, where his men were. And once more, returning to the campaign of 1800, it was not Napoleon's victory of Marengo, brilliant as this was, which brought Austria to her knees. That battle was fought in June; the decisive stroke was given in December by Moreau at Hohenlinden. Hohenlinden is in Bavaria, on the direct road to Vienna. There lay Austria's vital spot. It was to cover it that Marlborough had marched so swiftly from the Low Countries in 1704, in the campaign of Blenheim. Napoleon could march even more swiftly to assail it.

Turn now to the diagram of Central Europe.<sup>1</sup> It is a map which every student of Continental wars should carry roughly in his head. Start in imagination at the town of Basel. There the Rhine turns from the western course it has followed out of the Lake of Constance, and flows at first north-north-east, and afterwards north-west till it

<sup>1</sup> p. 62.

reaches Holland and the sea. Journeying down the Rhine from Basel you have hills on either side: on the left side the Vosges and its spurs, on the right the Black Forest; both serious but not impossible obstacles to armies. On the other side of the Black Forest rises the



This map shows the district where the headwaters of the Danube approach the Rhine and the Gap of Belfort, which leads from the Rhine to the Rhone tributary, the Doubs

Danube, and runs somewhat to the north of east till it reaches its most northerly point at Ratisbon in Bavaria. Then it turns to south-east and pursues its way to Vienna. Opposite Basel to the westward the mountain wall of the Vosges leaves off; there is a narrow plain, and to the south of it again the mountains begin, this time the Jura, which cover north-western Switzerland. Thus this narrow plain, this gap just opposite where the

Rhine turns, is of prime military importance. It is one easy way through from France to Bavaria and Austria or vice versa. France guards it with a fortress and calls it the "Gap of Belfort". Through it France can be penetrated, or French armies go through to Würtemberg, to Bavaria, and so on down the Danube valley.

Expecting an attack from France, where will Mack

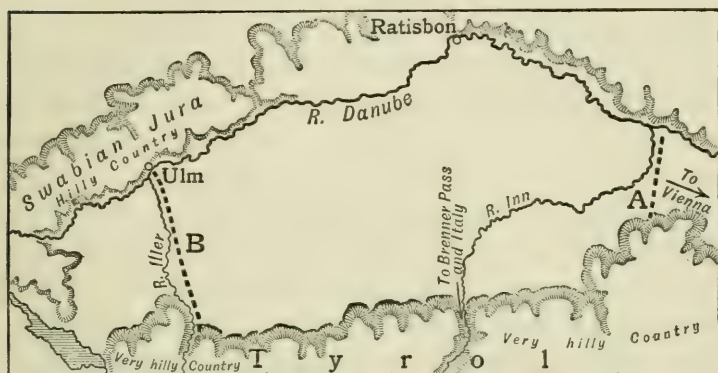


Diagram of the Bavarian Plain

take up a position to stop it? Würtemberg and the Bavarian plain, south of the Danube, is oval in shape. Plainly he cannot occupy a position across the middle; it is too long. He must hold the eastern end or the western end; both are narrow. If he holds the eastern end at A he is nearer the Russians; but, on the other hand, he uncovers the Tyrol and the Brenner road up the Inn and down the Adige, which joins him to the Archduke Charles in Italy. Besides, it was not certain whose side the Bavarians would take. The Austrians wished either to secure their help or to destroy

their army first. Finally, there was at B a short line, flanked on the north by the fortress of Ulm, by the Danube, and by the hills of the Swabian Jura, with the River Iller running along its front, and its left resting on the Bavarian Tyrol: this line the Austrians had previously held with success against Moreau. So Mack moved through Bavaria to hold the line of the Iller.

It may be remarked that this decision rested on some faulty conclusions. Napoleon was not Moreau; the Bavarian help was not secured, for the Bavarians took the French side and their army slipped safely away northward; and the French attack did not come against the line of the Iller. There was another way.

The facts present to Napoleon's mind in the end of August at the outset of the campaign were these. His *Grande Armée* was chiefly on the shores of the Channel, where it had been massed for the invasion of England. The Archduke Charles with 100,000 men was in Venetia. Mack with 80,000 was intending an advance into Bavaria. Russian armies were moving through Galicia and Poland towards Vienna. His mind was made up speedily: to hold the Archduke Charles with an army of 50,000 men under Masséna—very likely it would get beaten, but that would not matter, as what happened in Italy was only secondary; to strike with 200,000 at Mack and to crush him before the Russians could reach him. Once Mack was crushed and the Brenner road held by the French, the Archduke Charles could not get round to Vienna save by a long and roundabout march eastwards through mountainous country, and Masséna could be trusted to hinder him from moving very fast.



To move his men quickly, to strike Mack at once before the Russians came up, that was the problem. But, given that he could get at him before the Russians, which was likely enough, since he had about 500 miles to go and the nearest Russians about 600, that was not enough. Mack might retreat, or, even if he stayed to fight, might hold the French advance, and so give time to the Russians. Therefore Napoleon determined to strike, not direct at Ulm and the upper Danube, but to break through from Mainz and the Rhine farther down the Danube *between Mack and Vienna*. Thus he would cut him off from the Russians; but it meant a longer march—and more haste still.

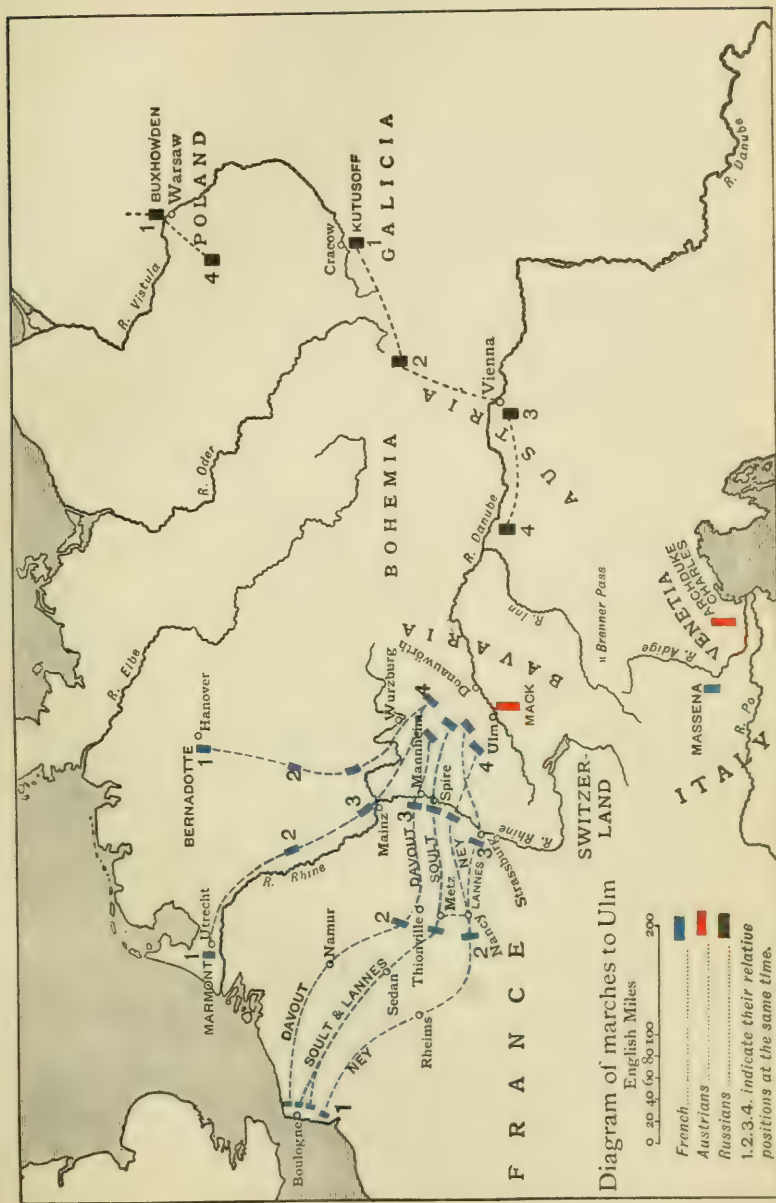
So, very secretly and suddenly, the order to march was given. The bulk of the *Grande Armée* broke up from Boulogne on August 29th, and hurried off by three parallel routes for the upper Rhine. Marmont set off from Holland three days later, and Bernadotte from Hanover, five great strings of men marching and marching in fierce haste south-eastwards and southwards. In twenty-four to twenty-six days they were all appearing on the Rhine. The world had never seen so big an army make such a march. Allowing for six days' rest, Soult's men covered 20 miles a day, 400 miles in twenty marching days; they *averaged* 15 miles a day for nearly four weeks on end, even including rest days. But they really had little rest; Davout did his 370 miles without a complete day's halt, Marmont 300 miles in twenty consecutive days, and, more wonderful still, it is reported that Soult did not lose a man on the way by desertion or sickness, and when Davout came in he had neither sick

nor stragglers. Perhaps this is not quite accurate. They certainly lost many horses, and the transport broke down somewhat. Still, the point is they went through, and the doing of it is a wonderful example of Napoleon's driving energy. There was little halt on the Rhine. On September 26th they were off again: Bernadotte from Würzburg, Marmont from Mainz, Davout from Mannheim, Soult from Spire, Lannes and Ney from the neighbourhood of Strassburg, like the fingers of a great left hand reaching eagerly out from the Rhine towards the Danube. Leaving the Black Forest to their right they pushed fiercely on. The weather was horrible; horses broke down, supplies ran short, even bread sometimes lacking. The cross-roads were deep in mud; but somehow, through sleet and snow and swollen streams, the force plunged on, and on October 5th were parallel to the Danube, the farthest west (the Guard) being about 20 miles from the river north of Ulm, and the farthest east being within 5 miles of Donauwerth. Davout and Marmont and Bernadotte *were all closer to Vienna than Mack was.*<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, was the fruit of this fierce marching. The French army was either on Mack's flank or ready to strike in between him and the Russians coming from Vienna. How much was gained by it may be judged from the diagram<sup>2</sup> which shows the approximate Russian and French positions (1) at the end of August, (2) on September 14th, (3) on September 25th, (4) on October 6th. When the French were within striking distance of the Danube the first Russian army was half-way between Vienna and Linz—more than 250 miles as the

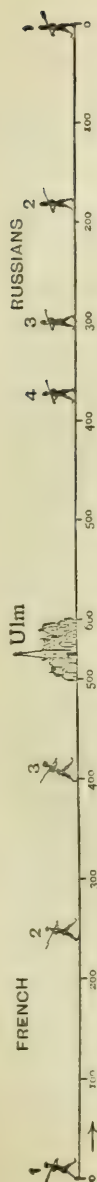
<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> p. 67.









Marching to Ulm: the numbers indicate the relative positions of the French and the Russians at the same dates; i.e. when the French had reached position 3 (the Rhine) and were about 100-150 miles from Ulm, the Russians were about Vienna—still 300 miles away

crow flies—and Kutusof was not a crow. The second Russian army had scarcely left the Vistula.

Consider now what each knew of the other, and what each would think the other would do—or could do.

Napoleon learned of Mack's position on the line of the Iller (between Ulm and Memmingen) before his own army had left the Rhine. *Obviously he did not, and could not, know whether by the time he reached the Danube Mack would still be there.* Napoleon hid his own march to the Danube behind a big cavalry screen under Murat, which moved along the northern side of the hills covering the north bank of the Danube. Mack was probably somewhere on the south side of these hills. But where? How much had he guessed? What would he do? On these points Napoleon got little information; he pestered Murat for prisoners.<sup>1</sup> *But he did not wish to disclose his own intentions, and so he was not able to find out much about Mack's position.*

Mack, learning that the French were on the Rhine, and misled by a show of French scouts in the Black Forest, believed at first that the French would attack the Iller line from the front.

<sup>1</sup> After some trouble Murat caught one.

Another reason for doubting if they would come down on Donauwerth was that north of the Danube lay the territory of Ansbach. Ansbach was *Prussian*, and Mack did not believe that the Emperor would dare to violate its neutrality and so risk bringing Prussia in against him. But Mack was wrong; Bernadotte, by Napoleon's express order, came right through Ansbach. Prussia protested but did nothing. Mack was resting on a broken reed.

However, by October 3rd he was sure of the French advance on the Danube. See what was open to him to do.<sup>1</sup>

1. He might start at once for Augsburg on the way to Vienna. If he did so, Napoleon could hardly cut across him. This would mean the Austrians giving up Bavaria and the Brenner road, which led by Tyrol, to the Archduke. On the other hand, it would bring Mack closer to the Russians, and he could still fight to cover Vienna.

2. He might retreat southwards either through Memmingen or Augsburg on Innsbruck and Tyrol. Here he would be on Napoleon's flank, if the French moved on Vienna, and he would have a line of retreat on Austrian Italy if they followed him. This, however, would (*a*) uncover Vienna, (*b*) separate him from the Russians.

3. He might concentrate and fight or defend Ulm. If the French cut his communications he would not starve, as he had collected ample supplies at Ulm and on the Iller. This might delay Napoleon, and the Russians might get up. But it gave Napoleon a central position.

Whatever he did it was needful to decide quickly, for it was clear that Napoleon would not dawdle.

<sup>1</sup> The possibilities will be seen on the map, p. 70.

One advantage Mack had. He could make up his mind and do what he thought best: Napoleon would have to provide for *every* contingency. It will be seen in the end that Napoleon did provide for every course *except one*—which was in his mind so foolish that he never thought Mack would adopt it—that Mack did pitch on this particular one (after a good deal of hesitating), and that, as Napoleon had not provided against it, the whole operation very nearly went wrong.

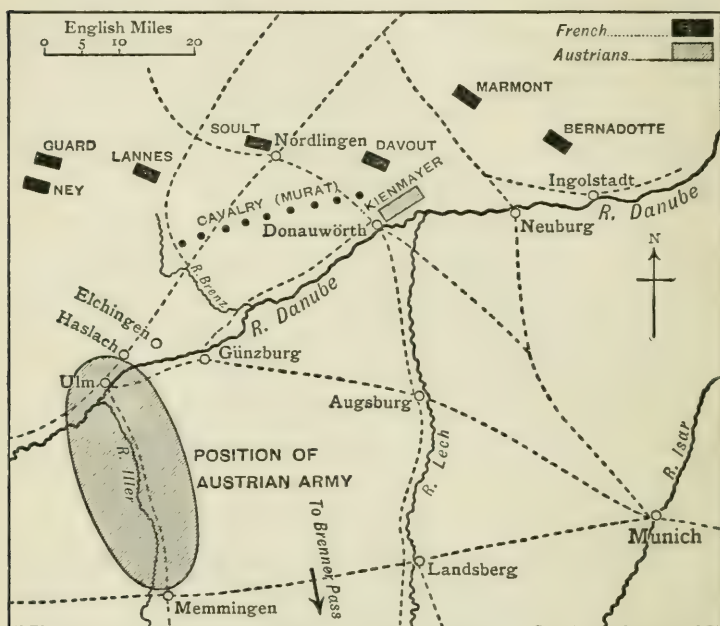
We are going to have the advantage of seeing what *both* sides were doing. It must be remembered neither of them knew exactly what the other was at; they could only guess—till they stumbled across each other.

The position was this. The French were on the north of the Danube almost at right angles to Mack to the east of him. What Napoleon expected Mack to do, presuming that he did what was the best thing for him to do, was either to make for Augsburg, Munich, and Vienna, or to fall back by the Brenner pass on Tyrol. It is plain that if he moved at once he could be in full force at Augsburg before the French could get many men there, and his retreat on Tyrol was quite safe. He might, however, be slow, in which case he could be intercepted. On October 7th, then, the French began crossing at Donauwerth, driving before them a force of 12,000 Austrians under Kienmayer, and hustled off towards Augsburg.

Mack, however, had other ideas. He had issued orders on the 3rd for his force to face about, pivot on Ulm, and move to the Danube, as indicated in the diagram by the dotted line.<sup>1</sup> His point of concentration was Günz-

<sup>1</sup> See coloured map facing p. 72.

burg. This change of front was a long job; the troops had to move by cross-roads and the weather was vile. Consequently, from October 4th to October 8th neither



Situation on October 4th-5th, 1805, when the French were approaching the Danube

Mack nor Napoleon knew exactly where any unit of the Austrian force was.

On October 8th they came in contact. Auffenberg, on what was now the Austrian right, wheeling to the Danube, ran into Murat. Lannes marched to the firing, and the Austrians were driven smartly back with a loss of about 2000 men; and on the next day, the 9th, Ney captured the bridge at Günzburg under Mack's nose, and



closed the way over the Danube. Mack thereupon fell back to Ulm.

So far all had gone well for the French. There was no longer a danger of Mack's getting through to Augsburg without fighting. The diagram of the night of October 8th shows that Soult, Murat, and Davout, and, if need be, Lannes, could be there sooner than he—the Guard and Marmont will not be far behind. But one thing still Napoleon lacked, namely, information. His cavalry could find the Austrians, but cavalry could not hold its enemy—could not compel it to stay and fight.<sup>1</sup> *Hence Napoleon did not know what Mack was doing.*

Accordingly, he hurried to stop all the bolt-holes. Soult went through Augsburg, rushing on to choke the Brenner road; Marmont, the Guard, and Davout were sent to Augsburg; Lannes, with Murat in front of him, aiming at the Iller; Bernadotte went scouring away south-eastwards to Munich to chase Kienmayer and to keep off the Russians—if they were there; Ney was brought down to the Danube, and *all of his army corps, except Dupont's division*, crossed to the right (south) bank.

Napoleon, it is clear, was still possessed of the notion that Mack would try to escape. He had blocked the direct Vienna road, and Soult was hurrying to block the Brenner road; meantime Mack had done the one thing that Napoleon could not imagine him doing—namely, ✓ practically nothing. He had gathered his men in and around Ulm, *mostly on the left bank of the Danube.*

The diagram of October 11th reveals the situation, and it is uncommonly clear to us—though remember that

<sup>1</sup> Modern cavalry armed with rifles have much greater power of holding an enemy.

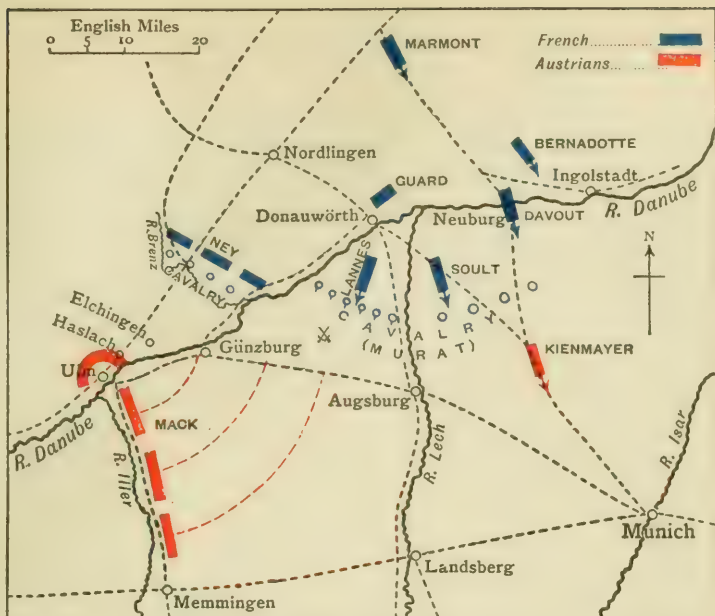
neither Mack nor Napoleon could see it. Napoleon's net is cast wide, but it does not look like catching much. It will not catch the body under Jellachich, which Mack had detached to move on Memmingen-Kempten, for Soult will be too late; Kienmayer is through; and *there is only Dupont's division solitary on the north bank to stop Mack's 50,000 men.* The transferring of the bulk of Ney to the south bank has left the net perilously weak.

The hole was soon revealed. Ney, acting under Napoleon's orders, wrote to Dupont on the morning of October 11th: "You will surround Ulm as best you can and summon it to surrender . . . take scaling ladders . . . the enemy, struck with terror, is retreating on the Tyrol, his lines of retreat being both intercepted."

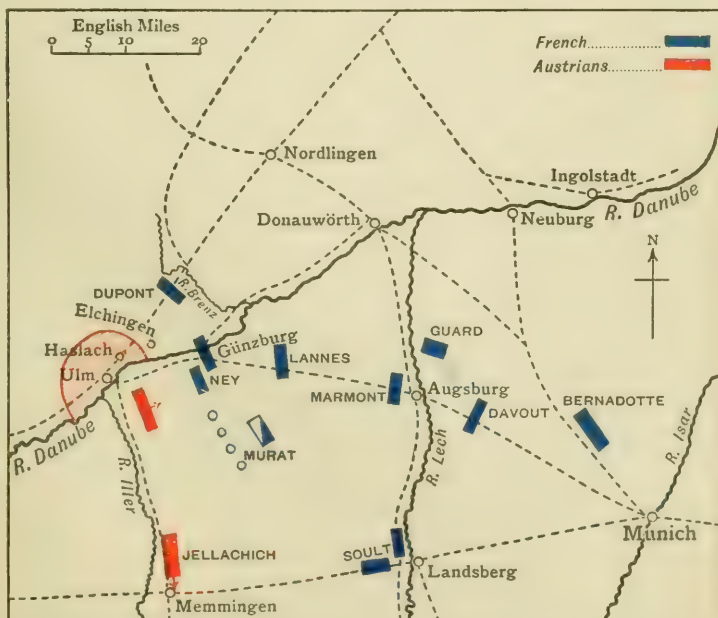
Accordingly Dupont, with about 8000 men, marched on Ulm to surround "as best he could" some 50,000 Austrians who were not thinking of retreating. As soon as he was seen he was attacked at Haslach, very roughly handled, and, though his men fought admirably, he was thrust back in great disorder. He wrote a dispatch announcing a brilliant success, but he was only really successful in escaping destruction. In fact, on the 12th his men had a panic and he fell back to the Brenz River.

Thus, on the 12th and 13th the *road to the north-east lay open*, and on the latter day Mack moved out from Ulm two great columns, one, under Riesch, along the river, and the other, under Werneck, towards Nordlingen. The last got quite clear as far as the Brenz, north of Dupont, who was in no state to stop anything—certainly not a force three times his size.

While the north-east lay open, and while Mack was



Marches to Ulm: Position on 8th October



Marches to Ulm: Position on 11th October





intending an escape, leaving only a garrison of 4000 in Ulm, Napoleon was still busy "catching nothing" to the south. Lannes and Marmont were moving on the Iller, Murat riding out "reconnoitring the enemy's position" on that river (enemy not there), and Bernadotte had heard of so many Russians near Munich that Davout was diverted in that direction, and Napoleon had gone in person to see about these Russians for himself—the only way to make sure.

At this point the whole affair looks like being a ludicrous failure. Some 200,000 French are cutting off phantom Austrians from where they are not going, or keeping off imaginary Russians, and the Austrian army can walk out of Ulm without any to hinder, nor even to pursue closely, and cut Napoleon's own communications in doing so.

But on the afternoon of the 13th Napoleon at length realized that the decision lay near Ulm, and the orders he then issued speedily deprived Mack of the chance which he had thrown away. Ney, with Lannes in support, was to cross at Elchingen, and get back to the left bank; Murat to follow. So at dawn on the 14th Ney swarmed in on Elchingen, his troops running over the main timbers of the bridge which the Austrians had neglected to destroy, pounced on Riesch, and drove him back to Ulm.<sup>1</sup> He then closed on Ulm from the east. Marmont came up from the south. Werneck, whom Mack hoped to be clear away, halted on the 14th, waiting for his own tail to come up, turned back southwards to attack the French on the 15th, caught a Tartar, and, chased by Murat, got

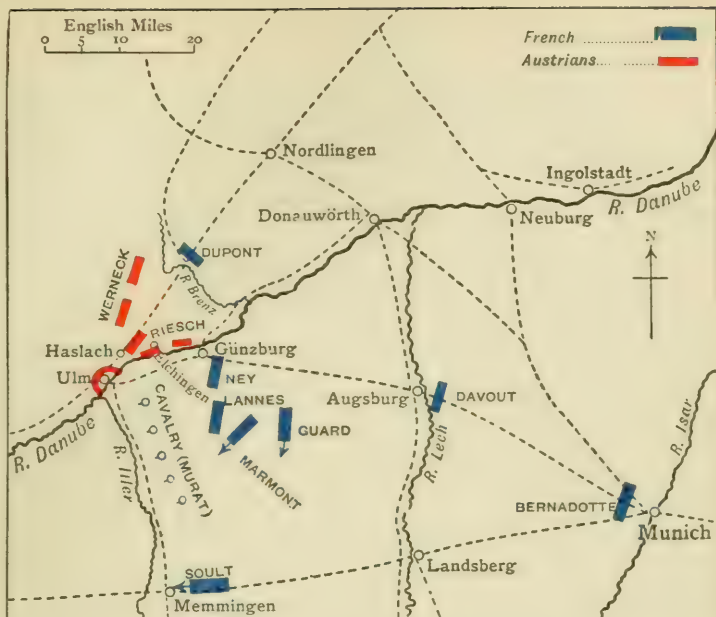
<sup>1</sup> Ney's title of the Duke of Elchingen came from this brilliant little action.

into difficulties, was headed off here and there, surrounded, and compelled to lay down his arms (October 16th and 17th). On the 15th Ney advanced on Ulm and summoned it to surrender. Mack had still some 23,000 men there, and naturally refused. He even posted a notice in the town forbidding the word "capitulation" to be even mentioned. His chief officers,<sup>1</sup> however, were not of his mind. Either with or without his consent they asked for terms on the 16th, and on the 17th Mack, yielding to their faint-heartedness, agreed to surrender by the 25th if not relieved. He actually did surrender the town on the 20th; the officers went free on parole, the men remained prisoners of war.

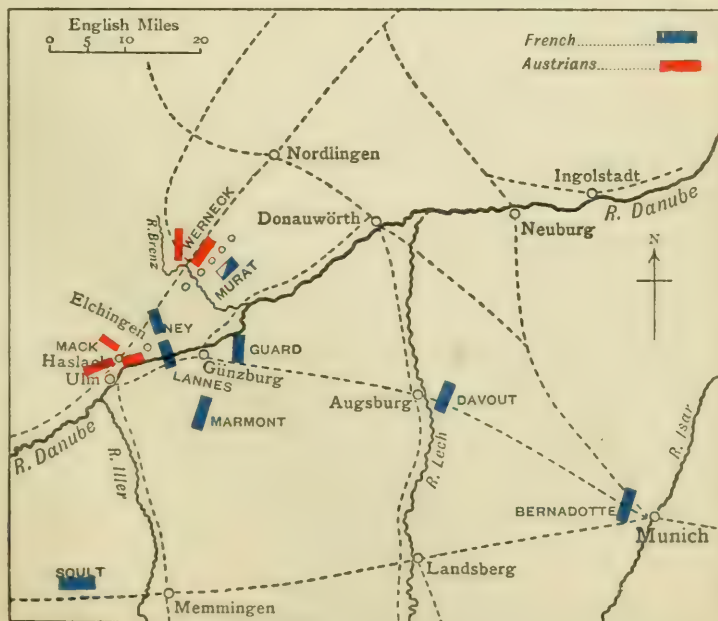
Altogether the Austrians lost about 50,000 in killed, wounded, and prisoners; Kienmayer got off with 12,000, Jellachich with 6000. The rest who escaped were mostly from Werneck's shattered command. They lost Ulm; they failed to hold out till the Russians came; they left both the Brenner road and the way to Vienna open. Napoleon marched to Vienna, took it, and in December destroyed the Russians at Austerlitz.

The campaign of Ulm is often seen in a false light; the triumphant ending and the tragedy of the luckless Mack obscure things. We are apt to see Genius swiftly pouncing on Incompetence: Genius works to a plan, In-

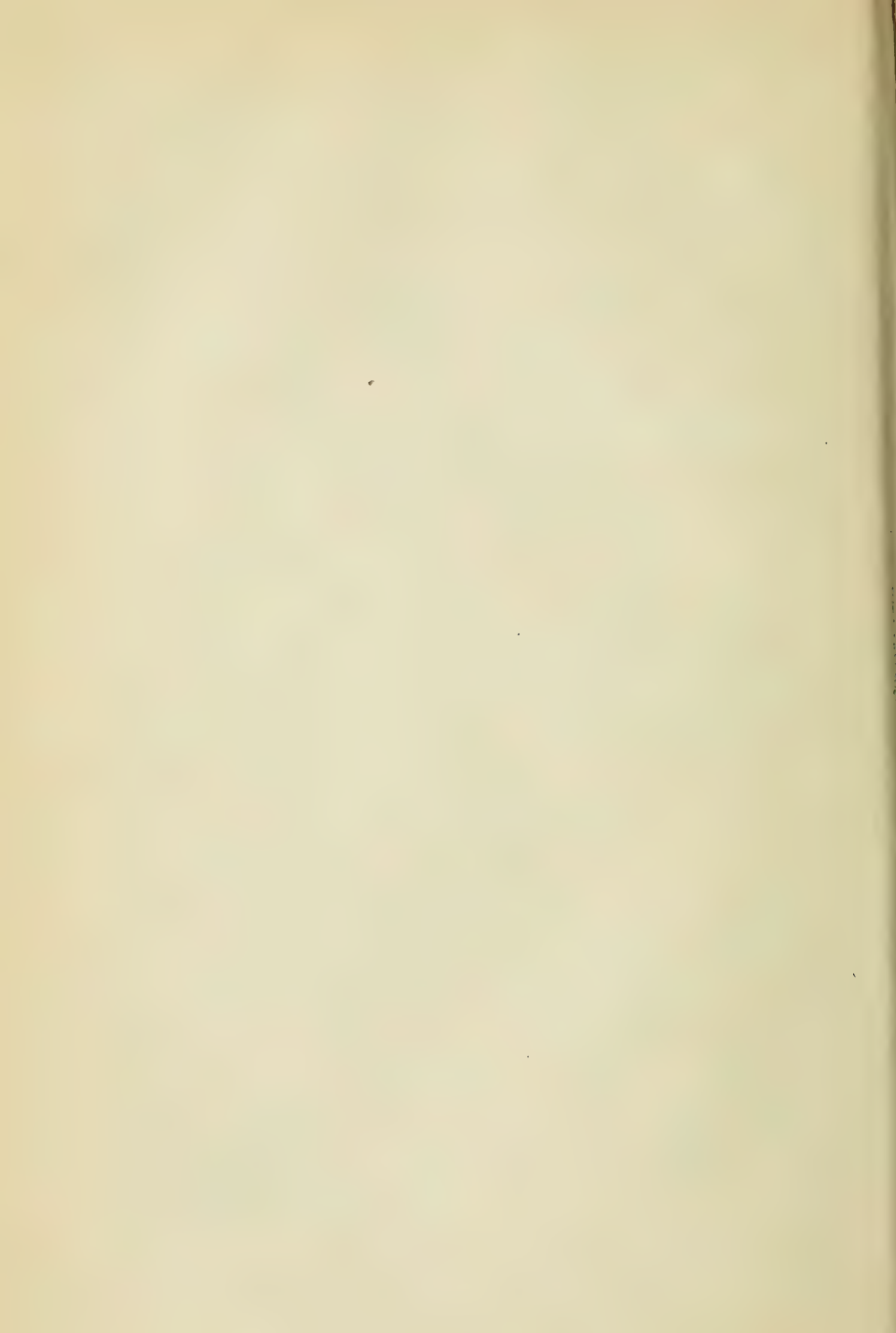
<sup>1</sup> Mack had innumerable difficulties. To begin with, the young Archduke Ferdinand was in nominal command, though the Emperor had told him to take Mack's advice. He did not, but relieved Mack of his presence by escaping with a cavalry regiment on 14th October. Further, Mack was of low birth, and the nobles in the army were jealous of him; and he was a reformer, so everyone disliked him. At one time he had had a great reputation and popularity. He was not the incapable officer he is sometimes represented as being.



Marches to Ulm: Position on 13th October



Marches to Ulm: Position on 14th October





competence muddles, and the result, we add, was a foregone conclusion. Closer study is apt to produce a violent revulsion. Napoleon's elaborate scheme, we think, really failed; Mack ought to have slipped through; both sides blundered so badly that neither deserved success. This is perhaps more foolish than the first idea.

Avoiding extravagance in either direction, the following things emerge:—

1. Napoleon did not plan from the outset the surrounding of Mack in Ulm. *He did not know that he would be there.* What he did do was to march swiftly and place his troops so that he could interpose between him and Vienna if Mack delayed. We have seen that, till October 13th, he did not expect Mack to stay in Ulm.

2. His advantage was gained by his speed. His men marched nearly twice as fast as either Russians or Austrians, and kept up their pace for an amazing time. He said, truly, that he "won Ulm by his soldiers' legs". We must remember that such a march is not likely to be repeated. Only in countries where railways and roads are very few will large bodies of men ever have to march far and fast. Railways and motor transport have changed the old conditions. Further, a march of this kind could not be concealed nowadays, or masked behind a cavalry screen. Secret service would reveal it, and news is transmitted fast and by such roundabout ways. Still, the point to grasp is, that Napoleon's success at Ulm was largely won by his *comparative* speed and secrecy, and that the commander who has a superiority in these things, now as of old, has an enormous advantage.

3. A mistake was made in leaving Dupont isolated

on the north bank, but that was all. If Ney's whole command had stayed there, Mack's one resource (after October 8th) was the Tyrol; and his men marched so slowly that Soult would probably have caught their tail, if not more.<sup>1</sup>

4. One mistake in so big an operation is not many. Turenne said that the man "who had never made a mistake in war had not made war long". All the other courses open to Mack were foreseen and guarded against.

5. In the "fog of war" commanders cannot always tell what the enemy is doing. They often must guess; Napoleon guessed—wrongly—that Mack would, at any rate, do something. Mack guessed—wrongly—that Napoleon would never leave the north of the Danube only half guarded. Were the guesses unreasonable?

6. It is often difficult to reconcile political and military aims, and if the political aims take first place this may wreck the whole campaign. The statesmen at Vienna wanted Lombardy regained and Vienna covered, so they sent Mack into Bavaria and the Archduke Charles to Italy. Mack was destroyed and the Archduke had to fall back to cover Vienna; he was too late to do it—indeed his army never got in a blow at Napoleon at all.

<sup>1</sup> Even if Mack had fallen in force on Ney's command north of the Danube, Lannes could have got to him in time to save him from being thrust out of the way; and the two could have held Mack till the rest marched to the firing—as Revolutionary armies mostly did (and Grouchy did not).

## CHAPTER V

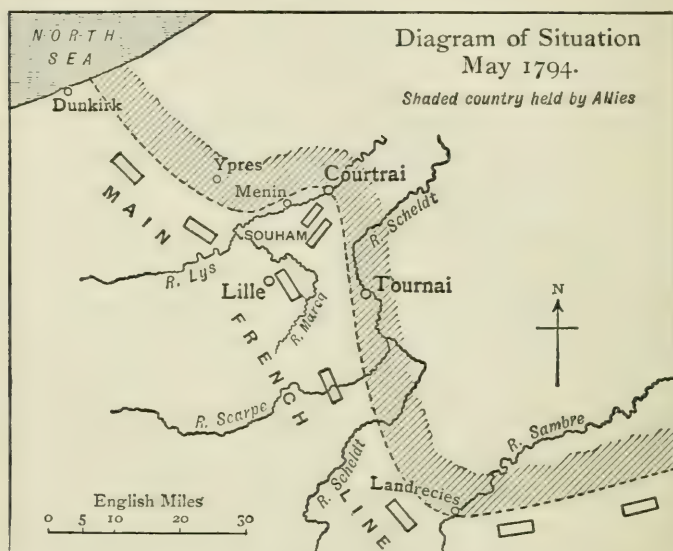
### The Operations around Tourcoing, 1794

NAPOLÉON's enveloping attack against Mack at Ulm is an example of a movement on a grand scale with big numbers, moving from great distances. It was completely successful, though it was for two days perilously near failing. Had it failed, it would have done so through excess of energy. The French went too far and too fast. Mack almost evaded them by remaining still. Tourcoing is on a much smaller scale. It is instructive, however, because it shows what were at that time the difficulties of working together even over short distances, and the mistake of asking troops to do more than is reasonably possible; further, because much fighting has gone on in the present campaign almost over the same ground; but most of all because the story of it is told so attractively in Mr. Belloc's little book called *Tourcoing*.<sup>1</sup> The real trouble is to condense into a chapter the whole of Mr. Belloc's narrative.

Briefly, the prelude to the battle is this. In the spring of 1794, when the French had recovered from the panics of 1793, and were really making headway again, French

<sup>1</sup> The British Battle Series. If it is not presumption to recommend them, one may add that they are all of extraordinary interest.

and Austrians were facing each other in long lines just south of what is now the Belgian frontier. The weight of the Austrian line had been gathered in the centre for the siege of Landrecies. On April 3rd they took it. Meantime, a little farther north, the French general, Pichegru, had pushed an advance up the valley of the Lys from Lille,

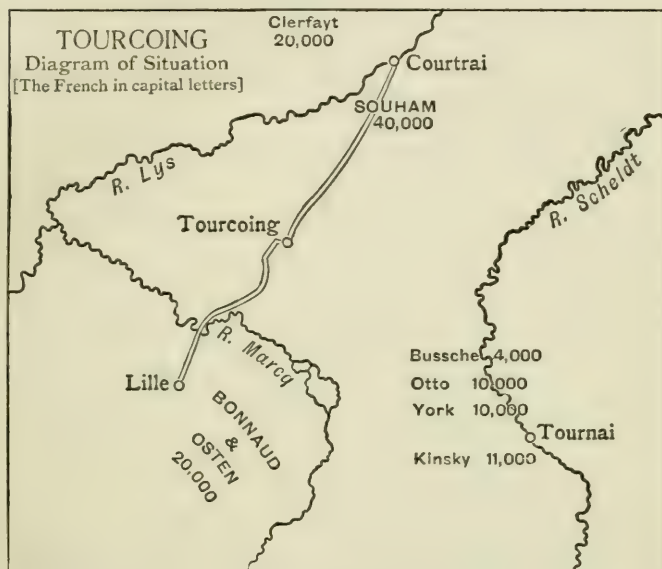


had taken Menin, and went farther to besiege Courtrai. Thus he had driven a wedge into the Austrian line and made a deep inward bulge in it. The diagram reveals the position, where it will be seen that each side has bent the other's line, and that Souham, in command of Pichegru's advance, is some way from the rest of the French.

So far, so good. But the Austrian line was not broken, it was only indented. It is clear that these French troops would be exposed to a converging attack



from three sides if they held their ground, and to an enveloping attack if Pichegru did not keep in close contact with them. But this contact Pichegru neglected, and thus, early in May, Souham's force of 40,000 men lay dangerously isolated in front of the French main line,



The Situation of the Allied Forces and of the French in the Neighbourhood of Tournai, May 11th, 1794

inviting attack.<sup>1</sup> His dangerous position did not pass unnoticed; on May 11th the Duke of York, commanding a British contingent in the Allied Forces at Tournai, suggested an attempt to cut him off from Lille by a concerted enveloping attack, and, the Emperor approving, it was decided to try the Duke's plan.

See, now, the circumstances as they appeared to each

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Belloc compares it to the part of a football team that is "off-side".

side, and look at the diagram.<sup>1</sup> The Austrians had to the north of the Lys nearly 20,000 men under Clerfayt—on Souham's left and north-eastern front; immediately to the south, round Tournai, they could gather (a) 4000 Hanoverians under Bussche; (b) 10,000 Austrians under Otto; (c) another 10,000, chiefly British, under York; (d) 11,000 Austrians under Kinsky: in all 35,000 to the south, and 20,000 to the north. The whole force would not get there; say 50,000 men.

This, however, was hardly enough. It might dispose of Souham's 40,000, but he was within easy reach of French support: less than 15 miles off, around Lille, not a day's march away, there lay 20,000 French under Osten and Bonnaud. If these came up, and Revolutionary armies had, as the Austrians knew, a disquietingly prompt habit of marching to the sound of the firing, the balance would be upset, the boot on the other leg; instead of the Allies cutting off Souham they would be outnumbered and nipped between Souham and the Lille force.

So, to make sure, a big column under the Archduke Charles, 18,000 strong, was to come up from Landrecies in the south, throw back Bonnaud and the Lille troops, and then, joining the rest, interpose in overmastering force between Souham and his supports. Even allowing for detachments, this force would now be about 65,000 to Souham's 40,000, and a force that is cut off by superior numbers commonly loses heart.

Briefly, there were three movements to take place: *a short march* from the south-east by Bussche, Otto, York, and Kinsky; *two marches*, neither long, from the north by

<sup>1</sup> p. 79.

Clerfayt all alone; *three long marches* by the Archduke Charles. The third was the most difficult exploit, but the second was also uncertain. Clerfayt was isolated from the rest, and no orders could reach him without the waste of half a day.<sup>1</sup>

For all this to succeed punctual co-operation and secrecy were required. Souham had only to retire a day's march to be in safety; and, further, he would be much too big for the Allied columns, *if they came up singly*. Finally, if the French got wind of it, they might turn the tables.

Now for Souham. He knew that he was in front of his main line and exposed. But the French force at Sainghin was only a day's march away. Further, his eyes were chiefly fixed northward on Clerfayt: he had just sharply repulsed an attack from him; he had not been pressed from the south-east. He knew also that the bulk of the Austrians lay far to the south, round Landrecies, 60 miles away. He expected to hear of it in time if any concentration was attempted against him; finally, he was not in supreme command, and to draw back without orders might ruin some design of his commanders.<sup>2</sup> Souham then would not move unless (1) he was so ordered, or (2) the danger became obviously acute.

All depended, then, on the timing of the Allied attack being accurate, and on Souham's remaining inert. If all went well Souham's force would be destroyed and the French centre broken. Orders were accordingly issued

<sup>1</sup> For these and the movements which follow see the map, p. 83; also the map at the end of the chapter.

<sup>2</sup> And possibly cost him his life. The Republic was in the habit of guillotining unsuccessful or timid leaders.

to bring the net round Souham, to gather the Allied columns. Let us see how far each had to move.

Bussche, Otto, and York were all close to Tournai. All they had to do was to move out about two or three miles overnight, so as to be ready to start at dawn. Then a march of 8 miles or less would bring them into Souham's rear, astride the road between him and Lille. As we shall see, however, Bussche was intended for something else.

Kinsky, lying to the south of York's column, had rather farther to go, some 11 miles. But, if his march was not checked, he too could be on the spot by mid-day: the "if" is rather a large one, as will come out from the map.

Clerfayt had a more serious task. He had to move to Werwicq on the Lys, and force a passage across the Lys—a day's work. Then, starting from Werwicq at dawn (like the rest), he would have about seven miles to go.

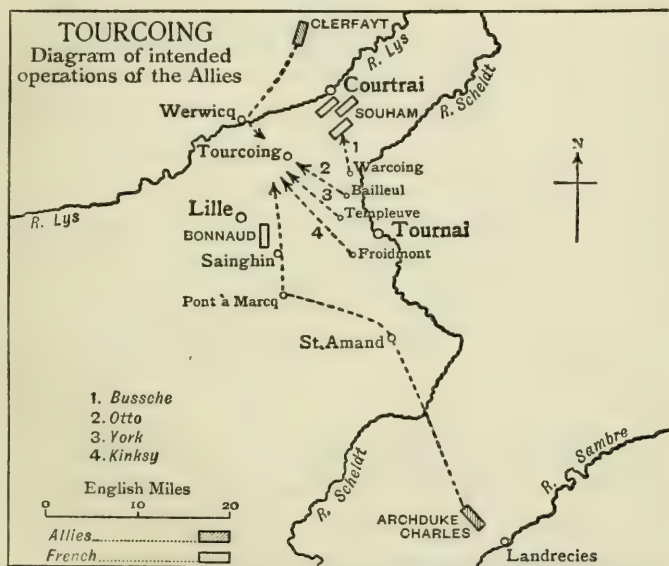
The Archduke Charles, however, was faced with something much more serious. The bulk of his forces were just to the north of Landrecies, with from 50 to 60 miles<sup>1</sup> to cover. This meant two days hard marching before he got within possible striking distance: one full day to St. Amand (about half-way); then 16 miles on the next to Pont à Marcq; then from there 14 more miles to be covered between dawn and noon, *including a fight on the way*.

It was arranged, however, Bussche was not to rendezvous with the rest. In order to mislead the French, Bussche was to make an attack on them on the east of

<sup>1</sup> The distance was 60 miles. But a column is long; some of them were already well on the way before the actual march began.



their position. This attack would, of course, be beaten off—4000 men could do nothing against 40,000—but it would make them think it was the beginning of an attack in force, and they would stay to meet it. With this object Bussche was to demonstrate against Souham's flank at Mouscron. Obviously it was no use to send a big force; it would be wasted; besides, if it were too successful, it might frighten the French; but if they beat it they would be encouraged to hold their ground.



This diagram indicates the movements contemplated without taking into account the natural obstacles and other strategic matters: these are omitted from the diagram intentionally.

Thus we set down the time-table and follow it on the map.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See map at the end of the chapter.

## 84 OPERATIONS AROUND TOURCOING

	Thursday, 15th May.	Friday, 16th May.	Saturday, 17th May.
Bussche ...	—	Concentrate at Warcoing by nightfall.	Start before dawn and attack Souham's flank,
Otto ...	—	Concentrate at Bailleul <sup>1</sup> by nightfall.	Start before dawn,
York ...	—	Concentrate at Templeuve by nightfall.	Start before dawn,
Kinsky ...	—	Concentrate at Froidmont by nightfall.	Start before dawn,
Clerfayt ...	—	March from Thielt to Werwicq, on the Lys: cross that river.	Start before dawn,
Archduke	March from near Landrecies to St. Amand, 20-30 miles.	March all day from St. Amand, to Pont à Marcq, 16 miles.	Start before dawn,
and meet about noon at Tourcoing, directly in Souham's rear.			

All this looks simple enough on the diagram, where we can draw straight lines for each column's advance, and start them in imagination punctually. Certainly the Archduke Charles's men, who have marched all Thursday and all Friday, will not like starting before dawn on Saturday. Still, it is not impossible.

Now for more detail about the country over which the advance was to take place. The country is from a general

<sup>1</sup>Oddly enough there are two Bailleuls in the neighbourhood. This one is shown on the map (p. 83): the other is west of Lille.

point of view flat; that is to say, there are no conspicuous hills or valleys; but it really consists of a number of very broad and gradual rolls of land—wide open valleys severed by gentle rises, usually not more than 30 feet higher than the troughs. It was mostly fairly open, though parts were cut up with hedges. South of the Lys the soil was firm; the weather was good; there was no real difficulty in moving troops.

The rivers, however, were more serious. The Lys is a fairly big stream, with few bridges; there was one at Werwicq, but it might be destroyed before Clerfayt got there. He had pontoons, however, and after all the Lys did not affect the rest. Clerfayt alone had to cross it.

The Marcq, though much smaller than the Lys (it is not big enough to carry a barge to the south of Lille), is deep, with muddy banks and a soft bottom, and has no real fords. To cross it, with guns at any rate, a bridge was required. But, it will be said, why cross it? If the Archduke crosses it once he will have to cross it again.

A study of the map on p. 86 will suggest some reasons.

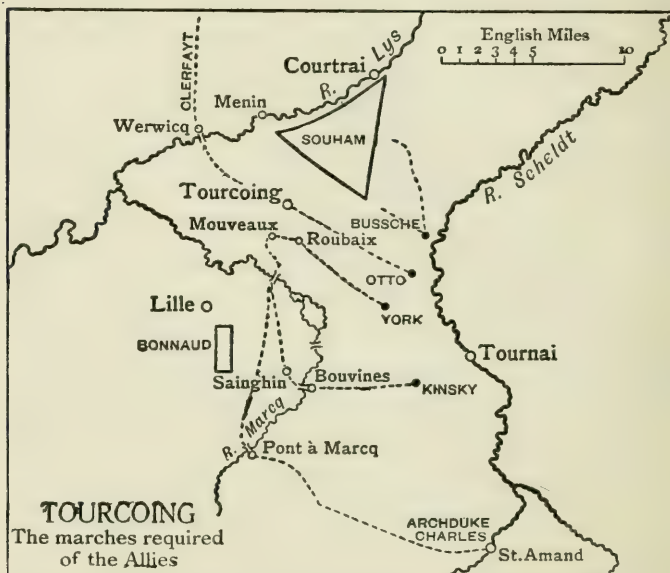
The Archduke can get from St. Amand to Froidmont and follow Kinsky. *But if he has to follow him, will he get there in time?* He has 18,000 men. How much road will he stretch over? Even supposing that he neglects the road, and moves over the fields, how much room is there for him between Kinsky and the river? Fields close to a river are often marshy. Plainly there is doubtfully room even for Kinsky between York and the river, certainly not for the Archduke.

Again, what was the Archduke to do? He was to

## 86 OPERATIONS AROUND TOURCOING

throw back the French under Bonnaud at Sainghin, and prevent him coming to Souham's help. *He cannot do that unless he crosses the Marcq.* He must cross the Marcq; and then, having thrown back Bonnaud, cross it again.

But this involves Kinsky in the task of crossing the



This map shows the divergence from the direct lines of the map on p. 83, caused by the lie of the country and the position of the French

Marcq also. Think what will happen if he does not. The Archduke with 18,000 will come up against Bonnaud with 20,000, and very likely will be beaten. If he is beaten he cannot get on to the rendezvous. *Kinsky must cross to join him and give him the needed superiority in force.*

Thus, if it was difficult to find room for both columns on the right bank of the Marcq, and if it was not enough for them to hold the crossings of the river and so prevent

Bonnaud joining Souham, then both must cross in order to beat Bonnaud, and this means that both must cross twice, and this river may play an important part in things. The Archduke has to cross at Pont à Marcq and move up till he gets level with Kinsky. This will drive off the enemy from the bridge at Bouvines, and Kinsky will cross; combined, they will beat off Bonnaud and march on to the meeting-place about Tourcoing to be there by noon. A heavy morning's work; and observe that each depends on the other. If the Archduke is late, Kinsky cannot cross. If Kinsky does not cross, the Archduke will be stopped by Bonnaud.

Having learned what was intended to happen, let us see what did happen: it is convenient to divide it under three heads, namely, (1) *preliminary*; the operations up to midnight, Friday; (2) the operations of Saturday; (3) the result on Sunday.

1. *Preliminary*.—Bussche, Otto, York, and Kinsky reached their respective jumping-off places in good time on Friday evening. The enemy had made no move.

2. Clerfayt's business on the Friday was to march from Thielt to Werwicq and cross the Lys. He received his orders by 10 a.m., but did not start till between 1 and 2. The country north of the Lys is sandy and bad going, and the Austrians made slow progress. The afternoon passed, evening came, with the troops in two great columns wearily plodding along sandy lanes. It grew dark while the heads of Clerfayt's columns were still three miles from the Lys. Three miles does not sound much, but it is an hour's march even over good roads. The rear of Clerfayt's force would be two or three miles



further back. Two hours marching, or perhaps three hours, for weary men in the dark, and then at the end there was the river to cross, the bridge to force, or, if it were broken, a pontoon bridge to make. Looked at this way, three miles short of the Lys at nightfall was a most serious shortcoming. It did not seem so to Clerfayt however. He made no attempt to push on in the dark, but bivouacked where he was. Mr. Belloc sums up the situation in words which must be quoted: "So much for Clerfayt. The Republic would have cut off his head." It is probable enough; and there is one reason why the Austrians so often failed where the French succeeded: every French general knew that if he failed he risked his life.

Clerfayt's tardiness, however, had not wrecked the scheme, it had only endangered it. If he set to work early in the morning, crossed the Lys by his pontoons, and pushed resolutely on he might still be at the rendezvous by the afternoon, in time to be useful. We shall see what he did do.

The Archduke's business for the Friday was to march from St. Amand to Pont à Marcq. But he was already late in reaching St. Amand; in fact, not all his men were in by nightfall on the Thursday, and instead of leaving St. Amand for his sixteen-mile march to Pont à Marcq in the morning it was after 10 p.m. on the Friday night before this weary column started. His orders were to be at Pont à Marcq *in time to start before dawn*. That was now clearly impossible. The short night of May is not enough for tired men to march sixteen miles in. He was bound to be late at Pont à Marcq, and he let Kinsky know this.

Unluckily he *did not say how late he was likely to be—* perhaps he did not like to say.

Here, then, was the plan beginning to crumble on the other wing. Clerfayt, with nearly 20,000, to the north, the Archduke, with 18,000, to the south, were neither of them up to time; and, what was worse, the Archduke would delay Kinsky too. *That commander could not cross the Marcq till the Archduke's column came up.*

2. The advance (*Saturday*).—In ignorance of the breakdown taking place to the north and south, Bussche, Otto, and York moved out punctually before dawn on the Saturday. Bussche's object, it will be remembered, was to make a diversion, to cause Souham to think the attack was coming on him where he was, *and not to his rear*. Bussche accordingly divided his 4000 Hanoverians, marched up to Mouscron on Souham's flank with 2500, and sent 1500 more round further to the north. Of course Souham beat him off, and drove him out of Mouscron almost back to where he started from. But that was all in the plan. He had made Souham stand and fight. The prey was still there; could the rest net the beast?

Otto and York were both punctual and successful. Otto's 10,000 marched by Leers and Wattrelos, driving in the French outposts, and by noon had seized Tourcoing. He had done his eight miles, and was now exactly where he should be on the direct road between Souham and Lille.

York, also with 10,000, moving just to the south almost parallel with Otto, drove the French out of Lannoy by a bayonet charge from the Guard, met a fiercer resistance at Roubaix, two miles on, where the

French were entrenched, but again carried the position and rather reluctantly went on farther to Mouveaux, two miles further. Why he was reluctant is plain enough. From Roubaix he could look into the valley of the Marcq. What he expected to see was that valley filled by Kinsky and the Archduke's men. What he did see was a valley empty of Austrian troops. But five miles away across the Marcq was the French camp at Sainghin with 20,000 men in it. A further advance would imperil his flank. York wished to retire, but he was overruled; so he too pushed on to Mouveaux, and after a very sharp fight occupied it late in the afternoon. Here he was on a line with Otto and able to look towards the Lys: the prospect was equally discouraging. There was no Clerfayt either. True, there were sounds of heavy fighting both by the Lys northwards and in the Marcq valley westwards, but it was a long way off. So the sun set leaving Otto and York at the rendezvous, but uncomfortably isolated. Why were neither Kinsky, the Archduke, nor Clerfayt there? and—more disquieting thought—what was likely to happen on the Sunday if they did not come?

Kinsky, we know, had to work with the Archduke, and he was aware that the Archduke was behind time—how much he could only guess. Taking a hopeful view, he set off from Froidmont and marched to the bridge over the Marcq at Bouvines. The French held the eastern bank. Kinsky drove them out of that, and they retreated across the bridge and broke it. But on the farther side lay the main French force, and they had guns commanding the stream. Kinsky could not force a crossing till the Archduke, coming upon the left, took the French

on the flank. So he did what he could: he waited—and waited.

For in truth the Archduke was deplorably behind. He should have started from Pont à Marcq at daybreak, or before, but not even his advanced cavalry was there till eight in the morning. The mass of him did not reach Pont à Marcq till noon, and slowly began to cross. By two o'clock he was over, but had still fourteen miles to cover to get to the rendezvous at Tourcoing, and before that he had to join Kinsky in driving off Bonnaud. His weary, sleepy, and exhausted men did push on for five miles; they drove back Bonnaud; they made their junction with Kinsky late in the afternoon. But nine miles more was beyond them. They had been on foot for twenty-four hours, marching for seventeen, and fighting at the end of it. They could go no farther; they bivouacked, and Kinsky, making the best of a bad job, bivouacked too.

They ought to have been by Mouveaux at noon; instead, at nightfall, they were nine miles away, close to Sainghin; and they meant to stay the night there.

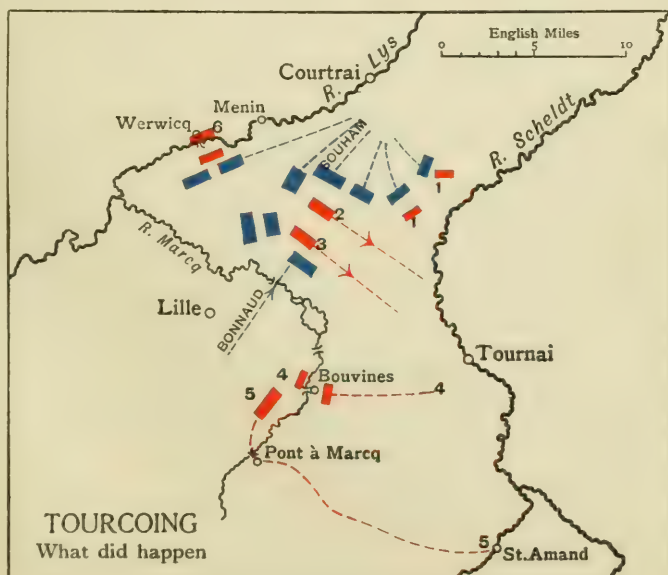
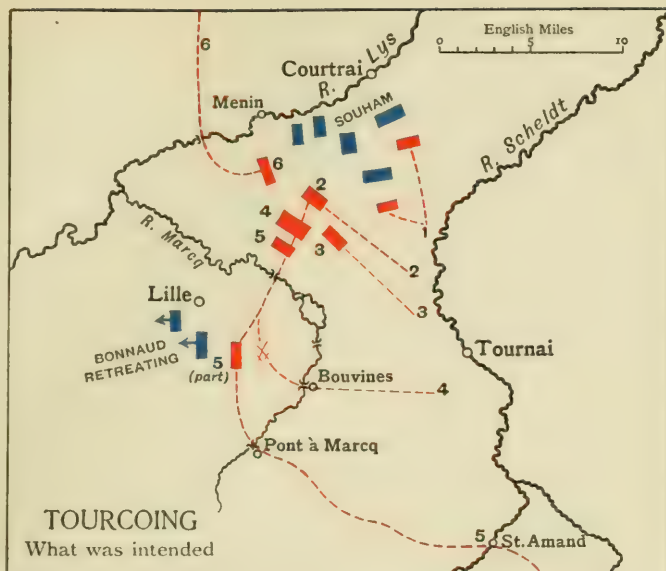
When it was known at head-quarters that they had stopped, messages were sent to enquire the reason and to urge them forward, but with no result. Kinsky returned the reply that he was no longer in command (the Archduke being his superior) and that he was ill; the Archduke alleged, among other things, that he was suffering from an attack of cramp. Even Kinsky could not get an interview with him. When he sought one with that fatigued royalty he received from a servant the reply "that His Imperial Highness must not be disturbed as he was occupied in having a fit".



Now for Clerfayt. He, too, failed, and failed worse than the Archduke. The Archduke did push on all that Friday night, but Clerfayt, as we have seen, stopped at nightfall three miles from the Lys. Even next morning he made no haste. He was not, apparently, of the sort that Stonewall Jackson valued so highly in war—a man who was always up at dawn. It was past midday on the Saturday before his men began the task of driving the French out of Werwicz. This was a tougher job than he reckoned—Moreau was there in some force—so, as the bridge was stoutly held, he bethought him of his pontoons. But—amazing mismanagement—they were not ready; they were in the rear somewhere, fallen behind on the way, and they did not come up till near nightfall. So Saturday night came with the bulk of Clerfayt's men still on the wrong side of the Lys.

Both to the north and south the surprise had failed hopelessly—in spite of the fact that the French had stayed asleep for longer than the Allies had any right to expect. Souham made no serious attack on the exposed York and Otto on the Saturday afternoon, nor did he slip off through the gap between them and Clerfayt. If the missing columns had even been in their places by Saturday night instead of Saturday midday, as was originally intended, their plan would still have been successful. Had either the southern wing or the northern wing come up they probably would have been able to hold Souham long enough for the other to join in. But, as it was, instead of 65,000 men interposing in Souham's rear, 20,000 only were there, and they were now pushed forward between 60,000 French. The biter was going to be bit.







For, on the Saturday night, the French woke to their danger. The very failure of the Austrians had made their plans obscure, but now it was revealed, and Souham, who was a man of energy, called a meeting of his generals and resolved to attack at once.<sup>1</sup> One division was left to oppose Clerfayt; the rest were swiftly gathered round the hapless York and Otto. Bonnaud was ordered to march from Lille and fall on their other flank. All set off at 3 a.m., and when the sun rose York and Otto at last saw men coming up from north and west—but they were not their friends; they were the French.

The story of the rest of it may be read in Mr. Belloc's book; but it is obvious what it must be. Attacked in front on both flanks, and with retreat threatened by forces numbering three to one, Otto and York had no chance. Both made disastrous retreats, losing heavily. York lost nineteen out of his twenty-eight guns, and had it not been for the Dragoons under Abercrombie and the Brigade of Guards the whole force would have been taken. As it was, both columns were utterly shattered.

The inferences are plain to see. The plan wrecked on two things: (1) the lateness of the Archduke's and Kinsky's columns, (2) the dilatoriness of Clerfayt. But between these distinctions should be drawn. The Archduke was set to do more than was in his power. To follow two long marches with a night march running on all over the third day, and the certainty of a fight on the way, was asking too much. There the staff went

<sup>1</sup> A rare example of a council of war deciding to fight. Souham was a big man who had been recommended to the French Government as one "who would squash Mr. Pitt like an over-ripe pear".

wrong. But the Archduke was also wrong in not letting Kinsky and head-quarters know how far behind his timetable he was. Had they known, York, Otto, and Bussche would not have moved. Certainly, then, Souham might have escaped; but unless the Archduke was up to time, the attempt to trap the French was certain to fail—and to react disastrously on the trappers.

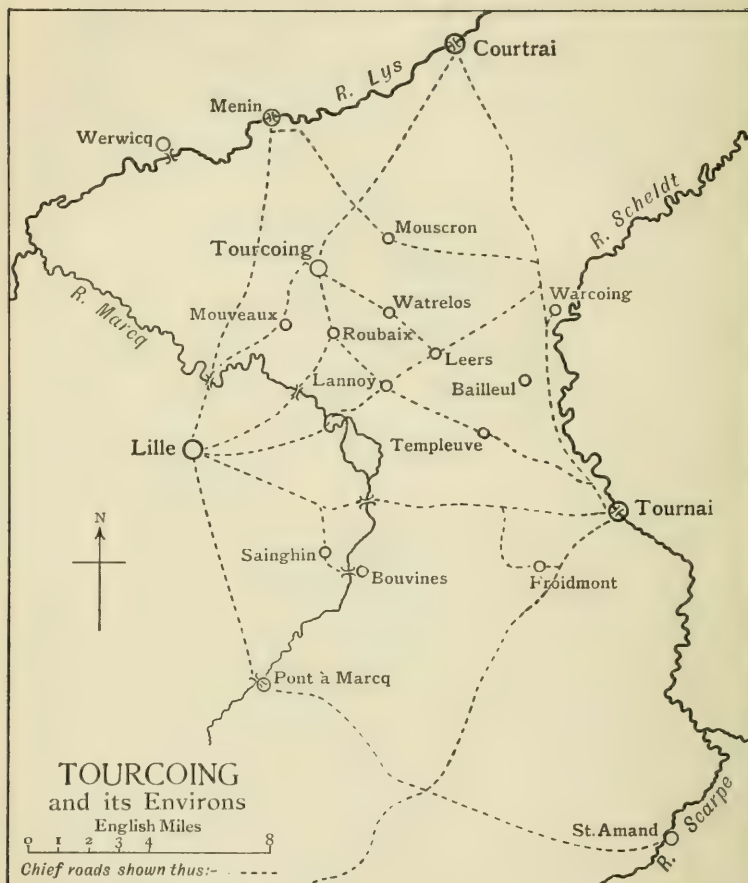
Kinsky is not so easily excused as the Archduke: he could have pressed on on the Saturday afternoon, and, had he done so, he might have saved any disaster—supposing that Clerfayt was punctual, as Kinsky ought to have presumed he would be. But Kinsky saw his superior stop, and he stopped too, under the comfortable feeling that it was his superior's fault that he was late.

Clerfayt dawdled and muddled. Little excuse is possible for him. But one must recognize the moral difficulties in his way. He was isolated, away from the rest, and, for all he could see, asked to poke his nose into a French hornet's nest. Doubtless there was a strong temptation to him not to be too punctual, to let his friends from the south get there first. He achieved that.

The whole operation is, it is true, on a minor scale, nor did anything decisive spring from it; it was not till the battle of Fleurus, a little later in the same year, that the French success became marked. Yet it is extremely instructive in showing how easily an enveloping movement which promises well and prospers up to a point may fail through lack of resolution and punctuality, and how, if it fails, it opens the way to a ruinous counter-stroke.







## CHAPTER VI

### “Veni, Vidi, Vici”—Jena, 1806

[A map of Central Europe will be found at the end of Chapter VII.]

THE campaign of Jena is the swiftest of all Napoleon's lightning strokes. Prussia sent him an ultimatum demanding that the French troops should retire forthwith to the Rhine, beginning that retreat on October 8th. The day before it was due to expire, Napoleon remarked to his Chief of Staff, Berthier: “Prince, we will be punctual; on the 8th, instead of being in French territory, we'll be in Saxony.” Six days later the French met and shattered the Prussian armies in the double battles of Jena and Auerstädt (October 14th). So fierce was the pursuit that by the end of October Prussia had lost every fortress except Magdeburg, and every shred of an army except Blücher's; and eight days later both of these had surrendered. Exactly a week from the date fixed in the ultimatum saw the Prussian army dispersed in headlong flight; exactly a month (October 8th–November 8th) found the whole country under Napoleon's heel. Cæsar wrote, *Veni, Vidi, Vici*; Napoleon repeated it.

Moreover, this Prussia which crumbled under his hand was no weakling, nor petty State: it was the great military nation of Europe. Fifty years before it had

come triumphant out of a war in which France, Austria, Russia, and Saxony-Poland (then united under the same monarch)—each of the four allies far bigger than Prussia—had tried for seven years to crush it.<sup>1</sup> Its soldiers had won almost every battle against desperate odds. Their courage, their discipline, their efficiency were the model that all Europe had copied. In reputation there was none to match them. Yet against Napoleon, in one week, discipline, efficiency, reputation vanished like a puff of cannon-smoke. The monarchy, which half a century before had defied Europe in arms for seven long years, tumbled into ruin in a month.

The first thing will be to follow the story of this amazing downfall; and, later, to learn something of the Prussian and the French armies, their organization and methods of fighting, and the conclusions to be drawn from the Jena campaign. For it is necessary in advance to guard against inferring from this downfall that excellence in drill, training, manœuvring is of no avail, and that Prussia lost because its men were too stiffly trained to deal with Napoleon's new methods. This is not true; if it were, it would be a most dispiriting conclusion for us in England, because we have always followed the old Prussian tradition of quality first, quantity afterwards.

Jena was fought on October 14th, 1806, a year after Ulm. Briefly, the events of that year ran thus. After destroying Mack's army, Napoleon had marched down the Danube, driving Kutusoff and the Russians before

<sup>1</sup> Their population was about 90,000,000. Prussia's about 4,500,000. Prussia, of course, had the alliance of England and Hanover, which was more valuable in distracting France than in actual support on the Continent. What chiefly contributed to save Prussia, besides her own efforts, was the vacillating policy of Russia.

him. He had occupied Vienna, and then, pushing northwards into Moravia, had routed the combined Russians and Austrians at Austerlitz (December 2nd). Russia thereon agreed to a truce, and Austria soon afterwards made peace with the French at Presburg (December 26th, 1805), giving up Venetia, Istria, and Dalmatia, and agreeing to recognize the new kingdoms of Bavaria and Würtemberg. Napoleon followed up this blow by forming the Confederation of the Rhine, a league of sixteen princes of southern and western states who renounced their place in the Holy Roman Empire—that is to say, their allegiance to Austria—and bound themselves in alliance with France (July, 1806). It was this interference in Germany that provoked Prussia.

Once more we remark a conflict between military and political aims. If Prussia was going to fight Napoleon, why not fight in 1805, when she could have had the alliance of Austria and Russia? She had good enough grounds to go to war. In October, 1805, when his troops were marching on Ulm, Napoleon had violated Prussia's neutrality; he had sent Bernadotte's corps through the Prussian town of Ansbach. Prussia had remonstrated and mobilized—but had done nothing. Political aims came in. She waited to see if she could extract anything by her threat of acting, and Napoleon bought her off with the gift of Hanover. Yet, had she put 180,000 men—as she could have done—on Napoleon's flank, he could never have struck at Vienna; at least, had he done so, it is difficult to imagine that he could ever have got back. This lost chance, the display of feebleness, was not forgotten by either side. So when Prussia

protested in the summer of 1806, Napoleon paid no heed to what she felt or threatened. She would get no help from Austria, left in the lurch the year before; the Russians might promise to help, but it would be too late; Prussia's accepting of the bribe of Hanover had set her at war with England; and even if England did patch up the quarrel, *England did not count on the Continent, because she had no army*. If Prussia fought she would fight alone, and Prussia knew it. She knew that the chance had been let slip owing to the feebleness of her politicians. Treitschke calls such feebleness “the political sin against the Holy Ghost—the one sin that cannot be forgiven”. Prussia has learned the lesson of Jena now.

On August 8th Prussia mobilized, but Napoleon knew that this was only a threat. Prussian mobilization was, for those days, a model of speed. It was Prussia's strong card in politics, so to speak; but Napoleon had seen the card played the year before, and had found it a bluff. He took no obvious step, though his army corps were all within reach. There was no march from Boulogne this time. So through August and early September politicians talked, soldiers gathered, and in Prussia the war-fever spread: young Prussian officers sharpened their swords on the French Ambassador's doorstep; Napoleon watched.

The simplest elements of the geography concerned are these.<sup>1</sup> Between Berlin and Paris lie three great rivers crossing the routes practically at right angles. From west to east these are the Rhine, the Weser, the Elbe. Substantially there is a northern route and a southern; the northern was over flat country, the southern

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 100.



has to pass by a good many hills. Thus the northern is the easier. On the other hand, there is this disadvantage; it meets all the rivers where they are big. From Napoleon's point of view he would have to force the Weser and the Elbe where they were difficult obstacles. The Prussians would not be troubled by these rivers, which were in their own territory. In any case, if they made the forward move, they would have to cross the Rhine, and it is not much harder to cross it lower down than at Mainz, for at Mainz it is already a big river with a strong current.

This appears to point to a Prussian northern advance; but there were other things to think of. To begin with, Prussia had as her (rather unwilling) ally Saxony. This State lies to the south of Prussia, and, therefore, it was easier to concentrate where the two States met. Prussia also hoped to secure help from Hesse, and that also lay in the same direction, though farther west. Finally, the bulk of Napoleon's army was to the south, on the Main, in Bavaria and Würtemberg. Hostile armies always tend to draw towards each other; but even supposing the Prussians decided to avoid the French army, and strike for France, Napoleon's army was considerably nearer to Prussia than the Prussians were to French territory. *He could strike first*, and he could reach Saxony sooner than the Prussians could get as far as the Rhine. If the Prussians used the northern route they would lay Saxony and even Prussia open to a counter-stroke before they could retaliate.

Thus the main route was likely to be the southern one; neither Napoleon nor the Prussians were inclined to choose the northern. Prussia had mobilized first,



Sketch Map of the Main Routes from Paris to Berlin

and her men were gathered in the neighbourhood of where Prussia and Saxony met—that is about where the Saale and the Elbe join.

When Prussia mobilized, the French troops were disposed as follows:<sup>1</sup>—

Guard at Paris.

Head-quarters (Berthier) at Munich.

1st Corps (Bernadotte) at Nuremberg.

3rd „ (Davout) at Nordlingen.

4th „ (Soult) on the Inn.

5th „ (Lannes) on the Lower Main.

6th „ (Ney) on the Iller.

7th „ (Augereau) at Frankfurt.

8th „ (Mortier) at Mainz.

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 109.

The Second Corps, under Marmont, was far away in Illyria, but the rest could concentrate fairly quickly for an attack by the southern route.

The southern route has several variations which will be seen on the map.<sup>1</sup> The choice, however, briefly, is between Mainz-Hanau-Erfurt-Magdeburg (cross the Elbe) or Mainz-Hanau-Wurzburg-Bamberg-Dresden (cross the Elbe). There are other divergencies and branches between the two, but they may be left for the present.

Remark that the Hanau-Erfurt-Magdeburg road goes on the left of the Saale: the Hanau-Wurzburg-Dresden road to the right of it. Notice, also, that a band of mountainous and woodland country (the Thuringian Forest) stretches from near Eisenach across towards the head of the Saale, going on to another set of mountains, the Fichtel Gebirge and the Erz Gebirge. On the other side of these lay Bohemia—Austrian and therefore neutral territory. Note, lastly, that from the neighbourhood of Jena an army attacking the line of the Elbe could make for either Dresden or the more direct ways of Torgau and Wittenberg.

The gist of the matter, then, is this. The Thuringian Forest, hilly, wooded, and scantily furnished with roads, was a serious military obstacle. It was passable, of course, but with considerable difficulty. No one would work through it save with some distinct military aim. But it was easy to round it at its western end, or to penetrate it at its eastern end, for there were good roads at either end. The western way leads to Magdeburg,

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 102.

the eastern to Dresden; but once arrived near Jena all routes to the Elbe are again open. Conversely, the Prussians could advance to Hanau and the Rhine by



Variations of the Southern Route from Paris to Berlin

either end of the forest. Further, the Prussians, having mobilized first, had, so to speak, first move, *if they chose to take it; if they delayed, Napoleon might seize the initiative, and then their movements would be dictated by his.*

It illustrates Napoleon's skill in forecasting what his enemy was likely to do, that he felt no need for haste.

He drew his troops towards the Main in September, but he left the enemy the opportunity to move first, feeling fairly confident that they would not take it.

Reckoning up chances and intentions, the following must be borne in mind: (1) Prussia could count 250,000 men, and the Saxons 50,000; Napoleon had 560,000 without counting nearly 100,000 more Rhenish and Dutch allies. The weight of numbers, therefore, was heavily against Prussia. (2) In field armies—that is to say troops who were on the spot ready to take their part in fighting—Prussia and Saxony mustered about 110,000 men, with 14,000 in reserve. Napoleon had 200,000, with 80,000 in reserve: again the balance was against Prussia. (3) The Prussians had been promised help from Russia; this was coming from the east.

Bearing these things in mind, it would seem (1) that the chances of Prussia's taking the offensive successfully were very small, and (2) that a retreat to the line of the Elbe would bring them nearer the Russians and do something to redress the difference in numbers, because Napoleon would have to leave troops on his lines. This pointed to a retirement and a defensive campaign.

On the other hand, the Prussians were unwilling to leave so much territory open—if they once lost it, it would be hard to win it back from Napoleon; besides, if Saxony were exposed he would attack that and compel it to grant him a passage over the Elbe at Dresden; and, further, the Prussians believed in themselves. They thought that the French successes had been won so far against second-rate troops, and, relying on Frederick the Great's tradition, they did not then think that a little



army was necessarily a contemptible one. They believed that Napoleon had won, so far, because no one had taken a vigorous offensive against him. A defensive campaign, therefore, did not suit their ideas.

They decided, therefore, to concentrate somewhere about the upper Saale. Here they would have the Thuringian Forest covering them to the south. It was not likely that the French would attack through it. They could bar Napoleon by the Magdeburg road; if he came by Bamberg they could attack him or they could take up a position on his flank; they could hold the line of the Saale, and he would be forced to attack them there.

Any of these things they *could* do; their plans, so far, were sound enough; but there were other dangerous and disastrous plans. They might try an offensive movement (which with their inferiority of number would be dangerous) by either end of the forest, or, worse still, by both ends, since that would lead to a wide severance of their wings, and expose either of them to be destroyed separately. Or again, they might break up their forces in the endeavour to guard all the roads, making a half-hearted attempt at the same time to push through the middle of the forest against the French lines of communication. Any of these might be fatal.

On October 5th their plans were still unsettled, and a council of war met to consider. A brief glance at the men present will help to reveal some of their troubles.

The Commander-in-Chief was the Duke of Brunswick—the man who, fourteen years before, had turned back

from Valmy. He was seventy-two<sup>1</sup>: he was nephew and pupil of Frederick the Great, too high to be passed over, but too old to adapt himself to what was new. Moreover, his heart was not in the work. He distrusted his subordinates and had said: "The greatest service I can render the King will be to preserve peace for him—if I can." He commanded the principal army of six divisions. Next in importance came Prince Hohenlohe, who commanded the Silesian army and the Saxons (five divisions). Hohenlohe had fought with some distinction in 1792-3 and had really studied French methods; he, however, was much guided by Massenbach<sup>2</sup>, his chief of staff, a man who, in vulgar phrase, would talk the hind leg off a donkey, and who was firmly convinced that everything the old school did was wrong. The third general with an independent command was Von Rüchel, also a Frederickian veteran, "the concentrated essence of the Prussian army",<sup>3</sup> an essence, be it added, that had been in bottle for fifty years. Von Rüchel was energetic, downright, confident that everything Prussian was perfect, but living completely in the past haze of the Seven Years' War.

Briefly, their ideas were:—

1. *Brunswick's*: "The best thing is not to be at war at all".

<sup>1</sup> The same age as Melas at Marengo and Schwerin at Prague; a year younger than Würmser at Castiglione, and two or three older than Suwaroff at Zurich. Blücher was seventy-three at Ligny. Radetsky was eighty-two when he won the battle of Novara. Lord Roberts was sixty-eight in South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Known later as the "evil genius of Prussia".

<sup>3</sup> Clausewitz's phrase. Müffling relates that, horrified at the impedimenta of the Prussian army, he asked Von Rüchel if they could not be reduced, and received the crushing rejoinder: "Sir, a Prussian nobleman never goes on foot!"

2. *Hohenlohe and Massenbach's*: "All Prussian methods are old and bad; therefore Von Rüchel and Brunswick are always wrong".

3. *Von Rüchel's*: "Nothing that isn't Prussian is worth anything; therefore Hohenlohe and Massenbach are never right".

It will be seen that the council of war was not likely to be unanimous, especially when it is added that there met at it also the King, Field-Marshal von Möllendorf, (another veteran of seventy), General von Phull, chief of staff, and five others.

October 4th saw a prolonged preliminary wrangle. The next day was entirely taken up with opposing plans. Brunswick was for an offensive move through the forest towards the western end; for this purpose the army was to concentrate westwards at Erfurt, on the left of the Saale. Hohenlohe, therefore, was for operations,<sup>1</sup> mainly defensive, at the eastern end of the forest; this would involve concentration eastwards on the right bank of the Saale. So wearisome was the dispute that Scharnhorst, then a junior officer,<sup>2</sup> the one man of clear military insight present, was moved to his famous aphorism: "In war it was not so much what one did that mattered, but that whatever action was agreed upon should be carried out with unity and energy". That was the one thing of value that emerged from the council of war.<sup>3</sup>

As usual, what was finally accepted was a compromise that had the merits of no one's plan and some of the

<sup>1</sup> Various; Massenbach was fertile in suggesting anything contrary to Brunswick.

<sup>2</sup> His rank was only that of major; he was, however, Brunswick's Q.M.G.

<sup>3</sup> It has become a proverb in the German army.

defects of everybody's. It was to concentrate and prepare to move through the forest on to the French flank. But the place for concentration was Meiningen, which would involve Hohenlohe's making a considerable march from the right bank of the Saale across the probable line of the French advance. Further, Meiningen, as a place of concentration, was dangerously close to the enemy; and, finally, the date fixed was October 12th, which gave Napoleon four days. He was not likely to waste them.

While the Prussian council was talking of concentrating, and quarrelling over plans, Napoleon's mind was made up. On October 4th the French were placed as follows:—<sup>1</sup>

1st Corps (Bernadotte), 20,000, at Lichtenfels.

3rd Corps (Davout), 30,000, at Bamberg.

4th Corps (Soul't), 32,000, at Amberg.

5th Corps (Lannes), 21,000, at Schweinfurt.

6th Corps (Ney), 20,000, at Nuremberg.

7th Corps (Augereau), 17,000, at Würzburg.

Guard, 80,000, at Würzburg.

8th Corps (Mortier), 20,000, at Mainz.

Murat, 20,000 Cavalry, Würzburg-Kronach.

Wrede, 26,000, in Bavaria.

It will be remarked from the map that these were not yet concentrated, but that they could concentrate almost immediately, whichever way they went. If towards Meiningen, Murat would lead, Lannes and Bernadotte follow, the rest closing up by converging roads; if towards the eastern end of the forest, Murat would still lead and Bernadotte follow, again closing up on the Hof and

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 109.

Kronach roads. Whichever way the Prussians came the French could meet them with a concentrated force.

Napoleon, however, had now decided what to do. It was essential for him to make the Prussians stand and fight. He wanted a battle which would wreck them before the Russians could come up; being so superior in numbers he could safely reckon to win. But it must be a decisive victory; one that merely threw them back in retreat to the Elbe was not enough. It must crush them. That put advancing by the western end of the Thuringian Forest out of court. He would only drive them back, and force them to make the concentration which they were so slow in making. Therefore the advance was to go by Bamberg, through the eastern end of the forest.

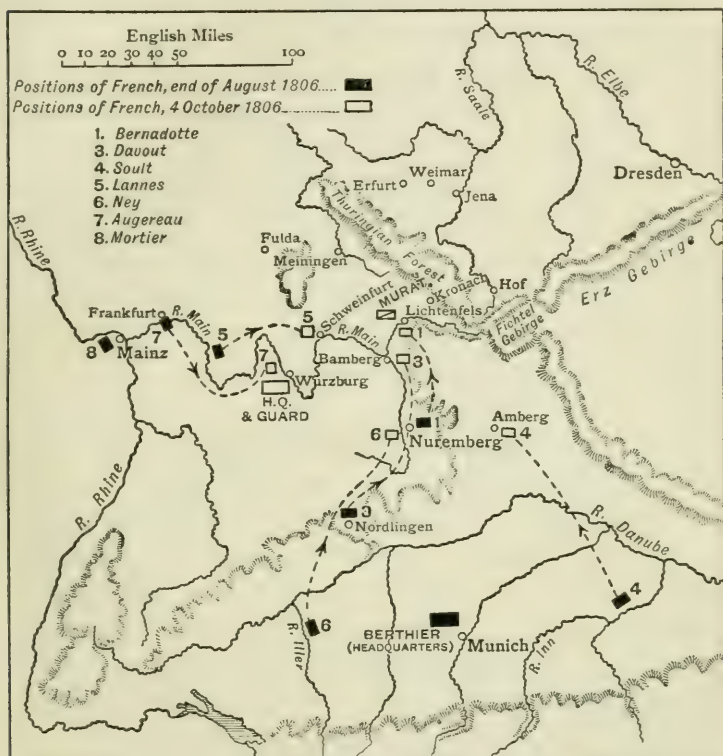
(a) If they stood and fought he would beat them; if they then retreated to Wittenberg or Magdeburg he might go faster; or anyhow—by striking at Saxony—force a passage of the Elbe at Dresden.

(b) If they took up a flanking position on the Saale he could cut the Saxon communications to Dresden, and threaten the Prussian communications by an advance on Berlin. If they retreated he could probably outmarch them; if not he could force them to form front to a flank, i.e. fight with their front parallel to their lines of communication to the Elbe.

It is true that he would by such an advance expose his own lines (supposing the Prussians advanced through the forest), but he had another line by Nuremberg and Strassburg. Again, he had the Bohemian frontier dangerously



close if he were beaten. But with his numbers he would not be beaten. He was justified in running this strategical risk, for victory would straighten out all difficulties.



Position of the French Forces at the end of August and beginning of  
October, 1806

Finally, the roads suited his purpose exactly. From Bamberg three routes lead from the Main to the upper Saale: (the left hand) Bamberg, Lichtenfels, Coburg, Grafenthal, Saalfeld; (the centre) Bamberg, Lichtenfels,

Kronach, Lobenstein, Saalburg; (the right) Bamberg, Baireuth, Hof.<sup>1</sup>

This was ideal. His big army would move through the hills on parallel routes big enough to carrying them all, yet not so far apart that they could not at a pinch aid each other. He was going to move forward, to use his own phrase, *en un bataillon carré de deux cent mille hommes*.<sup>2</sup> The key of the Napoleonic method, most soldiers say.

The advance is represented in the appended diagram: Lannes, followed by Augereau, on the left; Bernadotte, followed by Davout and he by the Guard, in the centre; Soult, followed by Ney, on the right. So, on October 8th, they started, and, averaging from 14 to 19 miles a day, drove their way through from the head waters of the Main towards the Saale.

On this same day the Prussian positions were<sup>3</sup>: Blücher at Cassel, Rüchel at Gotha, Brunswick's army at Hochdorf (just south of Weimar), with an advance column under the Duke of Weimar making for Meiningen, Hohenlohe's main body approaching the Saale, with detachments under Tauenzien at Schleiz and Prince Louis at Saalfeld. In other words, while Napoleon was rushing round the eastern end of the forest, with a force of 200,000 men on a front of 38 miles, the Prussians were irresolutely advancing to the western end with 110,000 men strung out over 85 miles. Each was aiming at the

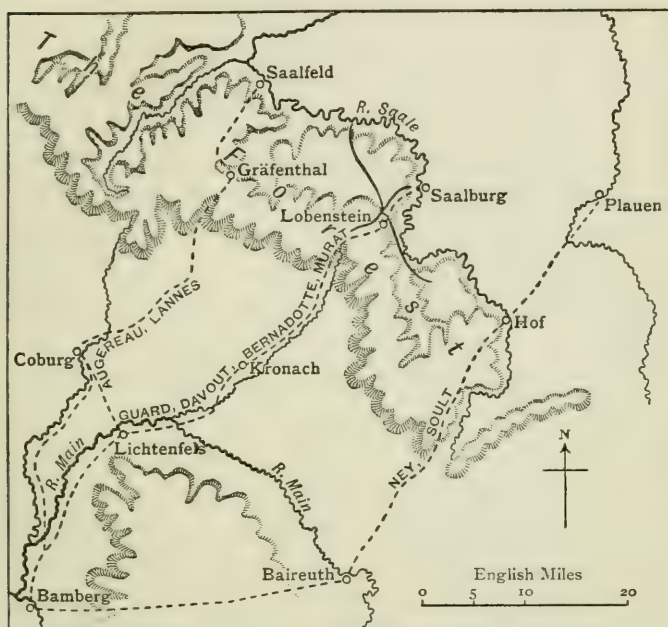
<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> The famous phrase first occurs in a letter to Soult, dated October 5th, 1806. It is only comparatively recently that strategists, especially French strategists, have demonstrated the value of this notion which Napoleon threw out so casually and never troubled to explain. *Carré* does not mean square: the shape is that of the ace of diamonds. It is sometimes called the Napoleonic lozenge.

<sup>3</sup> See map on folder at end of chapter.

other's communications, and was, so to speak, stretching out a right hand to strike—but how differently! Napoleon with a clenched fist and the weight of the body behind it, Brunswick poking out a timid finger or two.

Each, like a crocodile, was intent on attacking the



Map to Illustrate the French advance from the Main towards the Saale

other's tail. The French crocodile was compact and stout, the Prussian crocodile lean and terribly long. It is plain that the animal who gets first grip will compel his foe to turn round to defend himself; his movements for the future will be not of his own choice, but dictated by his enemy. Now, while on the 9th Weimar was entering the forest, Murat and Bernadotte struck and broke

Tauenzien's force at Schleiz, and on the next day Lannes swept away Prince Louis at Saalfeld. The campaign was but three days old and Napoleon was already on one of his enemy's lines of supply. Over 500 Saxon wagons were captured on the 11th.<sup>1</sup>

In these two affairs, at Schleiz and Saalfeld, the Prussians lost about 700 killed and wounded, 1300 prisoners, and 20 guns. Prince Louis was killed also, the first of that crop of generals to fall in the brief campaign. They also lost the feeling of confidence which the first success gives, and the staff began to lose their heads. Hohenlohe first decided to cross the Saale to the right bank, then moved men up the Saale to rally Tauenzien's fugitives, then drew them back again—the proverbial sequence of “order, counter-order, disorder”. Brunswick had on the 9th given up the offensive, and called in the Duke of Weimar from the forest and Blücher from Cassel; but no clear orders were given for the bivouac, and the Prussian cavalry settled down in the quarters reserved for Hohenlohe's head-quarters, and were with difficulty turned out. Hohenlohe's men, having described a remarkable triangle, of which each side must have seemed longer than the other two, found themselves on the 11th “as they were”, at Jena, and, having been under arms for three days and two nights, flung themselves down by the roadside and slept when and how they could. All this was ominous.

Meantime Napoleon, though he did not know what the Prussians were intending—a matter of little surprise,

<sup>1</sup> For all these operations which follow, see map on the folder at end of chapter.

as they hardly knew themselves—was himself energetically acting up to the spirit of Scharnhorst's aphorism "to do what was agreed upon with unity and energy". Thinking that Hohenlohe was still to the north of him, near Gera, he pushed forward vigorously towards that place. No enemy was found, however, and it became clear that Napoleon's first idea was wrong. No battle was to be had at Gera. Between 1 and 2 a.m. on the night of the 11th–12th definite news came from a Prussian prisoner that "the King of Prussia was at Erfurt with 200,000 men",<sup>1</sup> and Napoleon thereon issued the orders for the manœuvre which would give him a battle. Briefly, it was this: Bernadotte and Davout, who were most to the north, were to go on to Naumburg and act as a right-wing stop. Soult and Ney to wheel in from the right and, with the Guard, become the centre. Lannes (inside left) to form the advance-guard, regain touch with Augereau, cross at Jena, and hold the enemy till the rest came up. The movement, shown on the map,<sup>2</sup> reveals some crossing, but Davout and Bernadotte were furthest forward, and time was essential. It would take Soult too long to go to Naumburg.

While on the 12th the French were wheeling round to a gathering-point at Jena the Prussians were doing nothing. Augereau was isolated on the left bank of the Saale, but he was left in peace. Hohenlohe lay just to the west of Jena, Brunswick's army 10 miles away westwards at Kapellendorf, Rüchel's westwards again beyond Weimar.

<sup>1</sup>Incorrect, of course—he was nearer Weimar, and he had not much more than a quarter of this force with him—but it told Napoleon what he needed.

<sup>2</sup>See map, p. 114.

(C 754)



Late at night, on the 12th, a decision was at length taken, but a fatal one: it was to retreat—that was only foolish because so long postponed—but (here was the mistake)



Map to illustrate the French concentration at Jena, October 12-14, 1806  
The figures indicate the successive stages in the movement

to retreat in two bodies. Brunswick was to set off north-eastwards towards Naumburg and to make for the line of the Elbe. Hohenlohe was to remain, and either cover Brunswick's retreat or threaten the French in flank.

Thus, at the very moment the French were concentrating, the Prussians were dispersing more widely.

On the 13th Brunswick lumbered off through Apolda, but covered only some 12 miles; in reality he was already too late, for Davout and Bernadotte were at Naumburg, and Davout had seized the crossing of the Saale at Kosen. If Brunswick got through it would only be by fighting; and against Hohenlohe, Lannes was crossing at Jena and Augereau coming up from the south. During the morning of the 13th Napoleon himself rode from Gera to Jena, and when close to the latter town heard from Lannes that there was a large Prussian force close by. He at once set all his corps again in motion,<sup>1</sup> bringing up Ney by Roda and the Guard and Soult from Gera. Murat, with the cavalry, was recalled from the neighbourhood of Zeitz. Thus during the afternoon and night the French were massing rapidly on Jena.

It will be seen that Napoleon was still wrong in one idea: *he thought the main Prussian force was at Jena*. It was not; it was marching on Naumburg. But Napoleon's plan was just as sound as if it had been. He would certainly crush Hohenlohe, and he had sent enough men to stop Brunswick till he could himself attack him in flank and rear.

The events of the afternoon and night of the 13th and the day of the 14th must be briefly told. Lannes, on reaching Jena, wisely did not bring on a premature action. He sent back for Napoleon, who joined him and in the afternoon climbed the Landgrafenberg, the high

<sup>1</sup> It would seem as if Napoleon had meant at first to give his troops a rest on the 13th, Ney alone having orders to move. Probably he was waiting for information.

hill on the left bank of the Saale, over Jena, and reconnoitred. He did *not* see from the "Napoleonstein"—as he is sometimes said to have done—Hohenlohe's whole force, because a ridge in front hides part of the ground where it lay. But he saw enough. Instantly he set his men to work to make a road possible for guns up the steep side of the Landgrafenberg. It was an arduous job, lasting far into the night. Napoleon himself, torch in hand, stood by advising and encouraging the men. Certainly he had no business to be there. It is not the affair of a commander-in-chief to meddle in the work of a gunner officer. But it was Napoleon's way to win his men's love by dropping the dignity of an emperor at times and becoming once more an artilleryman. Such picturesque incidents pleased his imaginative mind and delighted the rank and file; and it would be daring to say that Napoleon did not understand how to get the best out of French soldiers. Hohenlohe made no attack,<sup>1</sup> and no attempt to hinder the crossing, though the noise of the French was clearly heard. That night the Prussians lay round their gleaming bivouac fires: not a light showed among the French; but hour by hour men were coming silently up in support, massing on the Landgrafenberg and on the Jena road. Had the Prussian artillery found them out and opened on them while they were in close order they might have been thrown back. But a fog in the chill hour before dawn covered them, and now the blow was coming that Hohen-

<sup>1</sup> He had prepared to attack earlier in the day, while Lannes was unsupported, but Massenbach interfered again, and said it was against Brunswick's order to make any sort of attack.

lohe could not parry. With the earliest streaks of daylight Lannes pushed forward, securing room for the supports to deploy. At first the Prussians made a stiff fight of it, but a counter-attack made by the whole Prussian infantry blundered. It had marched with the utmost steadiness upon the village of Vierzehnheiligen, which the French had taken; it halted in perfectly correct line, at 200 yards, and delivered volleys with the accuracy of the parade-ground, but no further advance was made. No one ordered a charge, nor were supports sent up, and for two hours, with amazing courage, it stood in the open in line, firing at an enemy under cover, and exposed to a merciless return fire of musketry and case-shot. Once more Hohenlohe was waiting, this time for Von Rüchel, whom he had called up to his help from six miles away. But Napoleon was not going to wait. He had by this time 75,000 fresh men under his hand, besides Lannes' corps already fully engaged, and Murat's cavalry corps had come up. He saw, in his own phrase, that "the battle was ripe", and let his cavalry go at the Prussians drawn up in much shattered line. They crumpled up in a moment. Von Rüchel's command, arriving at last, was ridden down with the rest.<sup>1</sup> Away streamed the broken men, most of them making for Weimar, others fleeing to the north-west, with Murat leading the pursuit contemptuously waving a riding-whip.

Meantime a similar disaster had befallen Brunswick. Breaking camp on the 14th, he had groped his way

<sup>1</sup> Von Rüchel got Hohenlohe's letter about 9 a.m. His command was scattered and he could not start till 10. Good marching would have got him to the battle in less than two hours. He did not arrive till 2 p.m.

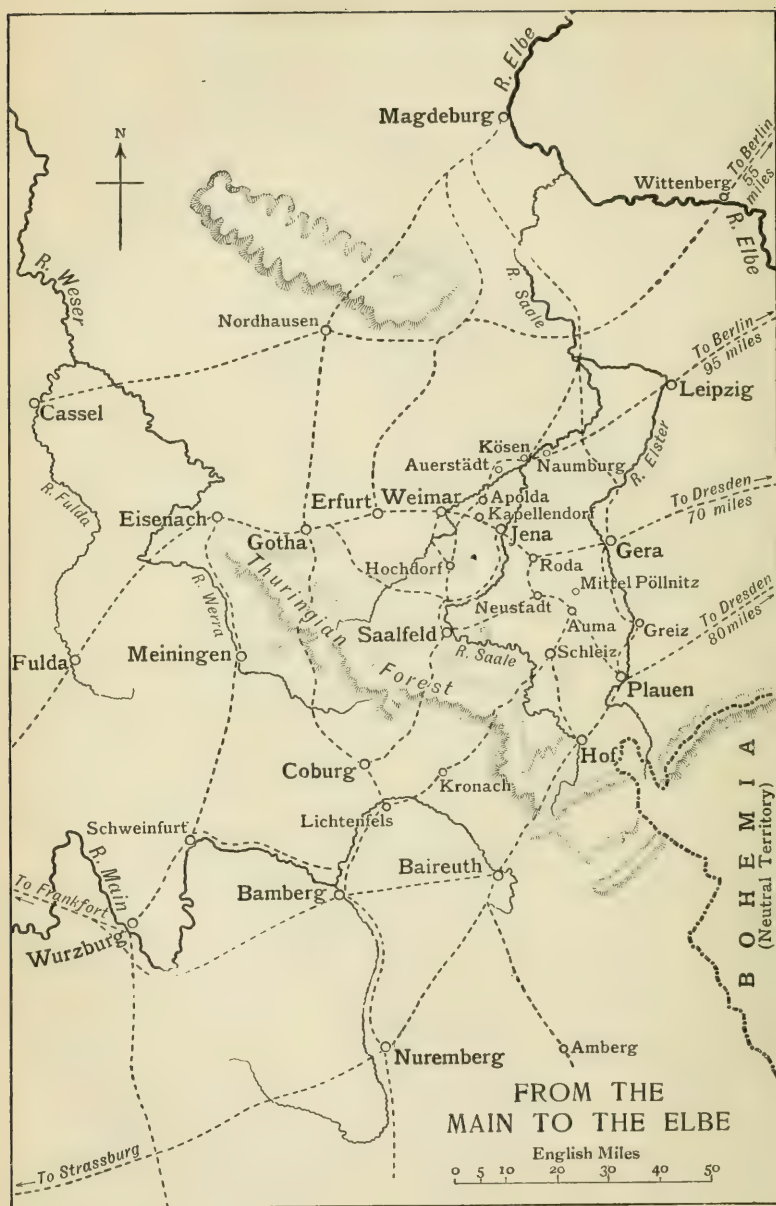
through the fog towards Naumburg, unaware that Davout, who had seized it the night before, was now pressing on through the fog towards him.<sup>1</sup> The two armies struck each other on the march at Auerstädt. Neither knew how big the other was; all they knew was that through the fog came a storm of bullets from misty figures. Although outnumbering the French by nearly three to one, Brunswick could not use his weight, nor could he see how few the French were. As his columns came up, so did fresh men for the French. All the morning Davout's men fought most fiercely<sup>2</sup>: Brunswick was mortally wounded, and no one could or did take his place. Early in the afternoon the Prussians, despairing of getting through, retreated, and came at right angles across the shattered wreck of Hohenlohe's army, fleeing from Jena. With the enemy in front, in flank, in rear, Brunswick's army broke. The whole force was in rout.

<sup>1</sup> Brunswick did not mean to cross the Saale at Naumburg, but to leave it on his right as he marched north-eastwards. He wanted, however, to prevent the French crossing there or at Kosen. He had been told on the 13th that the French were at Naumburg, though he refused to believe they could be there so soon. "But they cannot fly," was his observation. Davout's advance-guard covered 45 kilometres on October 12th.

<sup>2</sup> His losses were 25 per cent of his force: Gudin's division lost 41 per cent. But Auerstädt, coming as a crown to the victory at Jena, would have been cheap at the loss of a whole army corps. Davout was probably less affected by the fog than anyone else. At the best of times he was so shortsighted as to be almost blind.







## CHAPTER VII

### The Aftermath of Jena

[Two maps will be found at the end of this chapter, one of Saxony, Mecklenburg, and Brandenburg, and the other of Central Europe.]

PURSUIITS are, from a military point of view, of two kinds, namely, tactical and strategical. The first is what happens immediately on the enemy's defeat in battle: the victorious force follows as speedily as it may, pressing the retreating or flying foe. It gathers prisoners, wagons, guns; every breakdown, every disabled man falls into its hands. Upon the completeness of the defeat and the vigour of the pursuit will depend the immediate fruitfulness of the victory. But if the beaten force hangs together, it can, by fighting rear-guard actions in strong places, often hold back the enemy long enough for the main body to get clear away. To force these strong positions the enemy must deploy and unlimber guns, and meanwhile the rest of the beaten force will use the time thus gained to retreat. Examples of the efficiencies of different tactical pursuits lie between Waterloo or Vitoria on the one hand and Dresden, Leipzig, and Bautzen on the other. After Waterloo the whole French army perished, practically nothing hung together at all. After Vitoria the French lost

almost every gun. At Bautzen, on the other hand, Napoleon got nothing—very few prisoners and no guns; after Dresden the force which he sent to intercept the Austrian retreat was itself cut off, and compelled to surrender; and though Napoleon was completely beaten at Leipzig the pursuit was so feeble that he was able to make off with 80,000 men, still in good condition to fight, as they proved to the Bavarian general, Wrede, who adventurously tried to cut them off at Hanau, and found to his cost the truth of the old saying about making a bridge for a flying foe.

Tactical pursuit clearly then cannot be *organized*; the opportunity for it comes with victory in the field. The essence of it is rapidity and decision. If orders have to be awaited from head-quarters the chance may be lost.<sup>1</sup> It will chiefly rest on the vigour of the officers on the spot, and on the means to their hands. Cavalry is essential, and so is mobile artillery, for nothing keeps beaten troops on the move like these. Even so they must be rightly used. Napoleon pointed out that in a pursuit it is a mistake for cavalry to attempt to deal with unbroken infantry; they must ride on and try to come up with the broken men. Further, tactical pursuit cannot last long. Either the enemy breaks up altogether or reforms: in the one case the pursuit ends in success, in the other it fails. But in both cases it ends.

Strategical pursuit—the continued following of a retreating enemy who has retained some or complete

<sup>1</sup> Modern methods of communicating news by field telegraph and telephone have made it possible for a commander to keep in closer touch with his subordinates even though the fields of battle are far bigger; but he will see less for himself than the commander of Napoleonic times, and have to rely more on what he is told.

cohesion—is, however, a more complicated business, requiring the speed and vigour of the other, but, in addition, if it be on a large scale, the organization of a number of bodies of troops moving by various roads, so spread as to cover the country, yet not so severed that the enemy can turn and crush one by itself. Since the French “lived on the country”, a French army was obliged to be *dispersed* to live, to *gather* to fight, and to *radiate* out again like the sticks of a fan to pursue. In the driving energy needed to carry through a great pursuit Napoleon was unequalled. He has left two first-rate examples: his fierce dash across Spain in the autumn of 1808, crushing and dispersing the Spanish armies and pushing back Moore into Galicia, and the other the pursuit after Jena.

When, in the dusk of that fatal evening of October 14th, Brunswick's force, retreating on Weimar, struck the remnants of Hohenlohe's and Von Rüchel's beaten armies fleeing from Jena, all semblance of order was lost. Confusion turned into panic; infantry, cavalry, guns disbanded; wagons were left; the fugitives scattered across the fields with no ideas save to escape, to get away from the thunder of the French horse-hoofs. Tactical pursuit was easy and crushing; victors and fugitives poured pell-mell into Weimar. The only Prussian troops of those who had fought at Jena who still hung together were some twenty squadrons under Hohenlohe outside Weimar. No rallying-place had been assigned, and, as four<sup>1</sup> out of the five chief generals had been killed or mortally wounded, there was little chance of anything being done to restore order.

<sup>1</sup> Brunswick, Mollendorf, Schmettau, at Auerstädt: Von Rüchel at Jena.



Things went from bad to worse in the night. Hohenlohe's twenty squadrons melted away under the horde of fugitives who collected round them, and on the morning of the 15th he had with him only some sixty horsemen. The next day he met the King at Sondershausen, hoping



to find that Kalkreuth's reserve of two divisions, which had not been engaged at Auerstädt, would be intact. It too had been infected with panic; only about half were still with the colours. In despair the King gave Hohenlohe the chief command, appointed Magdeburg as the rallying-point, and himself rode away to the north-east.

Napoleon also took little rest on the night of the 14th. He was busy long before daylight with plans that

would complete the destruction of the enemy. To give the fugitives no time to rally, to hunt down the detachments which had not been at Jena and Auerstädt, to attack the fortresses before they had time to gather supplies, to force the line of the Elbe, and to close the roads beyond it to the Oder where the Russians would serve as a rallying-point for the broken Prussians—these were his aims. Davout, Lannes, and Augereau, who had done the bulk of the fighting, were given two or three days' rest; but he sent off Bernadotte, Soult, Ney, and Murat with his 15,000 horsemen at once, and fruit of this was soon gathered. Murat and Ney appeared on the 15th outside the walls of Erfurt. The town was fortified; there were in it 8000 soldiers, wreckage from Jena, and 6000 wounded, but it was scantily provisioned, and its governor thought that the best thing to do was to make terms. He surrendered that very day, and the French got some 14,000 prisoners, together with 120 pieces of cannon and all the reserve ammunition of the army; and, more useful to them, they had got one fortress to give the lead in feebleness. Others would follow suit.

There remained now the following to be accounted for: (1) the main mass of fugitives under Hohenlohe retiring on Magdeburg; (2) Blücher, with some 10,000 men, in charge of the grand park of artillery—his orders were to go round the western side of the Harz Mountains and join up north of Magdeburg; (3) the Duke of Weimar, also with 10,000, who had been the Prussian advance-guard cautiously poking his head through the Thuringian Forest, and who, when the army changed ends, was left in the rear. He also was making his way

round the west of the Harz Mountains; (4) Würtemberg with "the reserve" at Halle.<sup>1</sup> These were mostly Prussians. Napoleon was adroit enough to get rid of Saxony as an enemy. He set his Saxon prisoners free, declared he had no quarrel with Saxony and that he had every hope that peace would soon be made between them. Thus he detached Saxony from its Prussian alliance.

The first to meet with disaster was Würtemberg, who, with some 14,000 men, had fallen back to Halle on the Saale. Bernadotte, sent off on the 15th, struck him on the 17th, Dupont leading the attack. The Prussians held a strong position among the numerous islands which interrupt the Saale. None the less Dupont's grenadiers, with Dupont at their head, charged across the bridges, carried the guns, and drove the Prussians out of the town. For some time a fierce fight went on in the suburbs. At last the Prussians had to retire in square across the plain: they marched and fought for four miles till night saved them, but they lost thirty guns, 1000 killed and wounded, and 4000 prisoners. Besides this, a detached regiment, trying to join them from the north, fell in with the French and was destroyed. This affair cost the Prussians 8000 men, and destroyed their last line of unused troops.<sup>2</sup> The remainder fell back in disorder on Magdeburg.

Three days later (October 20th) Lannes and Augereau crossed the Elbe at Dessau, and Davout at Witten-

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> It is said that Napoleon rode over the field a day or two later, and, seeing a number of dead French soldiers out of the 32nd, remarked grimly: "What, still more out of the 32nd! Why I've had such a lot of them killed in Italy and elsewhere, there ought to have been none left." Others assign the scene of the story to Jena. But Bernadotte's command did not fight either at Jena or Auerstädt.

berg. Here the Prussians had meant to blow up the bridge, but the Saxon inhabitants ran on to it and picked up the fuses to save it from destruction. On the same day (October 20th) Hohenlohe's men, hotly pressed by Murat and Soult, streamed into Magdeburg. The French had made them move much faster than they were used to do. Pursuers and pursued had covered 90 miles in five days, fighting a number of actions on the way in which the French had picked up the usual gleanings of guns and prisoners. By Napoleon's order, Magdeburg was not invested at once. "It is," said he to Murat "a mouse-trap in which you can catch all the broken men trying to cross the Elbe," and he gave him orders to beat the country round thoroughly, and herd the fugitives into the city.

It is plain from the map that Hohenlohe had little chance of retiring through Berlin. Lannes, Augereau, and Davout were all nearer it than he was. Coming up behind Murat was Soult, and Ney a day later. Bernadotte was on the Elbe at Barby. The only choice left to Hohenlohe was to hold Magdeburg, or by setting off at once to the north to pick up Blücher and Weimar and make off across the Havel towards the Oder. But Magdeburg was in a state of indescribable confusion. It was so crammed with baggage that there was no room for the troops, who were forced out on to the glacis and outside the fortifications, where the French cavalry picked them up under the guns of the fortress. Food was short, and the governor refused supplies to the fugitives, alleging that he would not have enough for his garrison. He begged Hohenlohe to depart. Hohenlohe spent two



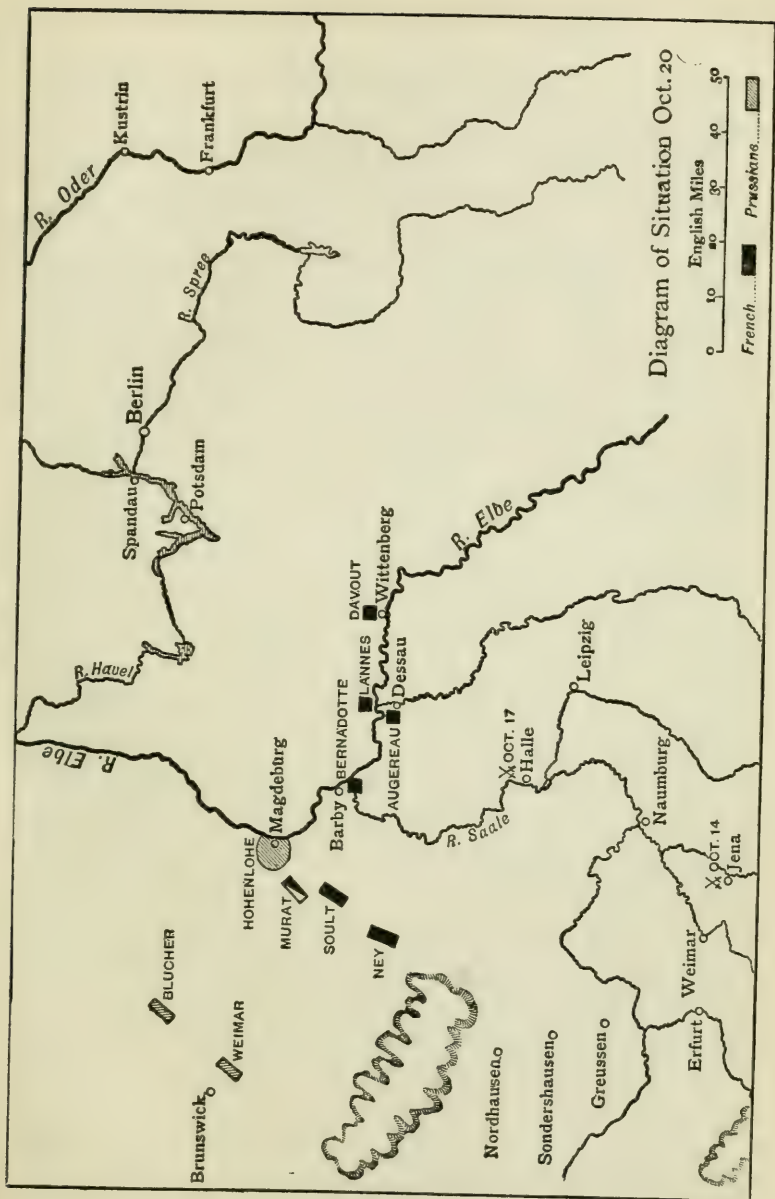
despairing days trying to reorganize the wreck. In the end he got some 25,000 men together out of the remains of his own force and Würtemberg's, including a good many squadrons of cavalry, and marched out to the north-east. Twelve thousand men were left behind in the town, in addition to its garrison, and Ney at once invested it.

Hohenlohe's point was now Stettin on the lower Oder.<sup>1</sup> He hoped to make a junction with the Duke of Weimar and Blücher, who had got safely round the Harz Mountains. They would raise his force to 50,000 men. He might reckon to pick up some more on his way, and gather more on the other side of the Oder; in all his numbers might rise to 70,000 men. This would be a force to reckon with—if all went as he hoped.

Leaving Magdeburg on October 22nd he made for the Havel, that long line of lakes and streams which carries the waters of the Spree to the Elbe. He crossed it and got in touch with Weimar and Blücher, who had struck the Elbe farther down. He planned to move along the north side of the Havel towards Zehdenick. If he reached Zehdenick before the French his way was clear through Prentzlau to Stettin. But there was the utmost need of haste, and the country, intersected with lakes and watercourses, with bad sandy roads, was all against speed; and even at this critical time, with no enemy within striking distance, Massenbach pedantically insisted on a detour to put a brook between the Prussians and their (non-existent) foe, although the brook was almost dry. To march on the other side of it he

<sup>1</sup> See map on folder at end of chapter.





declared "a military enormity"—so he wasted time to make war by rules.

By the 24th the bulk of Hohenlohe's force was at Neustadt, much exhausted: Massenbach suggested a day's rest, in order to refresh the troops to encounter the French. Hohenlohe pointed out that one day would be little use. After the usual argument came the usual compromise. They were to march to Gransee, rendezvous there on the 26th, hold a review, and address speeches to the men, urging them to pluck up heart and do their duty. But the meeting-place, Gransee, was some miles away from Zehdenick, where the road from Berlin joined.

While they were talking and trudging the French were making better speed. Murat, recalled from Magdeburg, had reached Potsdam on October 24th (65 miles in three days), and had met Davout, Lannes, and Augereau. Napoleon and the Guard came in the same evening. Davout and Augereau were in Berlin the next day (October 25th), and Lannes seized Spandau, a strong fortress, which made no resistance. These army corps had covered the distance from Jena, 130 miles, in about eight days. It was eleven days since the battle, and Berlin was already in Napoleon's hands; but he wasted no time over rejoicing or ceremony. Murat was hustled off northwards, with Lannes in support, and the very day that Hohenlohe's men were being reviewed and exhorted at Gransee, Murat's advance-guard rode into Zehdenick, surprised Hohenlohe's right wing, killed and wounded 300, and made 700 prisoners.

Hohenlohe, much dejected, now had to make another weary turn off to the left through Furstenberg. His men

marched all day, only being fed by the kindness of the peasants, who put out bread and cauldrons of hot potatoes along the roadside. At nightfall they drew near Boitzenberg, and the owner of the castle sent to say that food was ready for them. When they came there they found Murat's light horse already engaged with the victuals. They drove them off and devoured the remains, but could take no rest. Once more they turned off to the left and pressed on all night, hoping to reach Prentzlau before their ubiquitous enemy. In the grey dawn of October 28th they drew near the town. The weary soldiers strained their eyes across the lakes and through the trees to their right. There were men there hurrying along; but who? Were they wearing the Prussian cavalryman's plume, or were they Murat's dragoons. As they tramped into Prentzlau they found out. A bugle call—"Aux armes!"—French horsemen were already there. Once more the Prussians had been anticipated. Yet there was still a chance: the French force might be small, too weak to stop the big body against it. As a matter of fact it was quite small; it was only 600 dragoons with Lasalle in command. But Hohenlohe hesitated when every minute was of value. He let slip the chance which a resolute man would have taken of making a fierce attack at once, and, while he hesitated, more and more of Murat's corps came in to Lasalle's help. Instead of attacking, Hohenlohe prepared to treat, and once more Massenbach, whom he sent as his envoy, played him an ill turn. Murat told him that he had 100,000 men with him, and Massenbach believed it, although, considering the speed that the French had made, it was unlikely that any

infantry could be up. As a matter of fact, Murat had at the time no infantry at all, though Lannes was not far off—within a day's march.<sup>1</sup> But repeated defeats and surrenders had now robbed the Prussians of their *moral*: they expected that things would go wrong, and they were ready to accept the worst. Thus Hohenlohe, believing that he was surrounded and could go no farther, agreed that his men should lay down their arms. So his whole corps, 16,000 men, were taken prisoners. They were within 25 miles of the Oder; but they could not reach it.

There remained Blücher and Weimar, who by keeping more to the north had hitherto escaped. The Oder, however, was now closed to them, for Stettin surrendered on October 29th. Blücher had been following the same course as Hohenlohe, only keeping more to the west. When Bernadotte, who had chased Hohenlohe to Fürstenberg, heard of the Prussian surrender he turned off after Blücher. He came on him at Waren (October 30th), while Soult attacked Weimar's force at Wittstock. The Prussians fought well at each place, and Blücher held on till Weimar's force joined him. But it was now hopeless for him to return to Magdeburg—as he had thought of doing—and the way to Stralsund and the sea was closed by Murat, who had swept on through Anklam. Thus headed off, Blücher, with 20,000, turned away north-west-

<sup>1</sup> Lannes' corps made good speed, having marched two days and two nights, only halting for hasty meals, and having covered 65 miles in fifty hours; but Murat's daily reports to the Emperor generally conclude with a wish that M. le Maréchal Lannes should march faster. Napoleon gave all the praise for Hohenlohe's capture to Murat; but as Lannes was sore about it, he wrote in a subsequent letter: "Vous et vos soldats vous êtes des enfants. Est-ce que vous croyez que je ne sais pas tout ce que vous avez fait pour seconder la cavalerie? Il y a de la gloire pour tous. Un autre jour ce sera votre tour de remplir de votre nom les bulletins de la grande armée."



wards, with Soult and Bernadotte at his heels. Murat joined them on November 4th, and together they drove Blücher towards Lübeck. This was one of the old German free cities and claimed to be neutral. Blücher, who was not to be stopped by a "scrap of paper", marched into the town and made ready to defend it (November 6th). The next day Murat, Soult, and Bernadotte fell on him with 60,000 men. They stormed the town, the Prussians fighting fiercely from house to house, Blücher himself heading charges of horse down the streets,<sup>1</sup> and being met by salvoes of grapeshot from the French guns. Eight thousand Prussians were killed, wounded, and taken in the town, and in the evening Blücher with 4000 infantry, 3700 horse, and forty guns, hemmed in between the Danish frontier and the salt marshes, had at last to surrender. So perished the last remnant of the Prussian field-force; and the next day Magdeburg, the last of the fortresses, surrendered also. It was exactly a month (October 8th–November 8th) since the Prussian ultimatum expired, and Prussia had not a soldier nor a fortress left west of the Oder. A clean sweep had been made of 160,000 men.

The first thing to remark is the amazing vigour of the French pursuit. In twenty-four days Murat with 15,000 men had marched 500 miles, describing a great serpentine curve from Erfurt through Nordhausen, Magdeburg, Berlin, Stettin, Lübeck. He had received the surrender of close on 40,000 men in the field, besides two fortresses holding another 20,000. There is no such other cavalry exploit in history. Napoleon wrote to him: "Since you

<sup>1</sup> Alison has a picturesque description of the encounter.

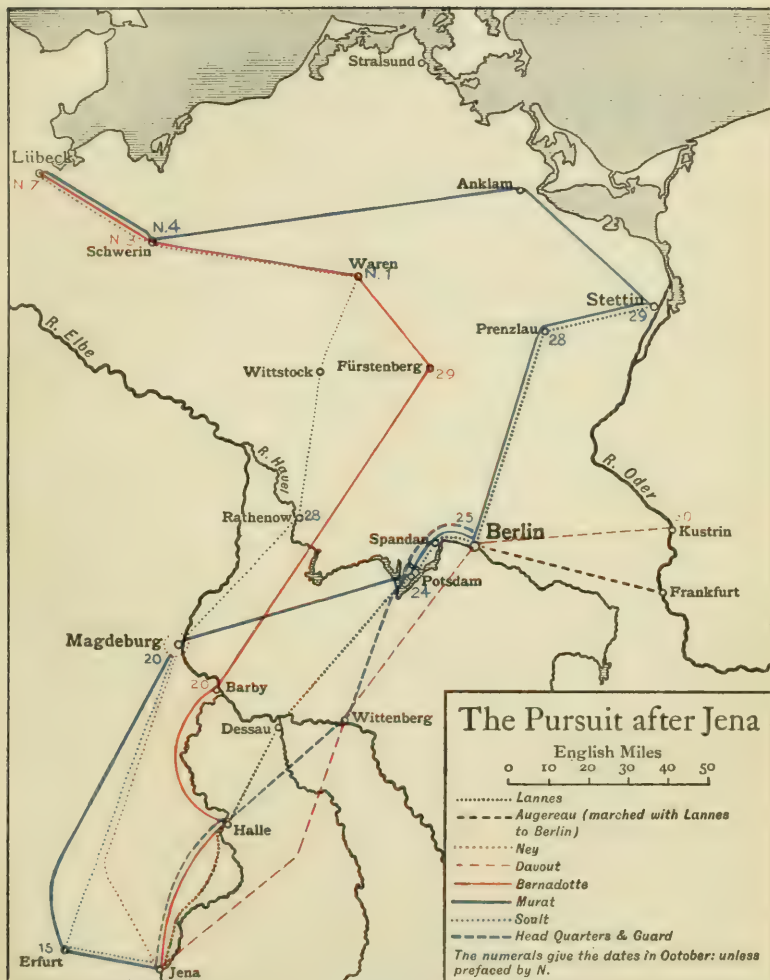


cavalrymen take fortresses in this way, I shall be able to dismiss all my engineers and melt down the battering-train”.

Remark also how well the infantry was arranged to support him. It is plain that no one corps could have kept up with him all the time; but each one came up as it was wanted. Ney went with him to Erfurt. Soult, who had taken a shorter road, joined him and kept up with him to Magdeburg. Leaving Soult there he picked up Lannes at Spandau, who followed at his heels to Prentzlau, where they overwhelmed Hohenlohe. Leaving Lannes at Stettin, he picked up Bernadotte, who had cut the corner, and Soult, who had also come by another short cut, and the three of them netted Blücher. Even then Murat was given no rest, but was sent off from Lübeck via Posen to Warsaw. Here, after 850 miles in six weeks, he at last got a well-deserved rest.

If, then, much of the French success was due to Murat's speed, more, perhaps, was due to Napoleon's foresight and driving-power. He knew what should be done, and he made his men do it. When the Prussians were tired they stopped; when the French were tired they went on. So the country was picked clean after the first harvesting at Jena.

Yet, though the French were wonderfully successful, it must be added that the Prussians broke down amazingly. It was not so much the armies left in the field. If they could not move swiftly enough to outmarch the French they were certain to be overwhelmed by superior numbers. The real failure lay in lack of forethought, in blundering, and in lack of resolution.





Though the Prussians had mobilized two months before war began, they were not really ready. Their supplies broke down, the fortresses were half-provisioned, no rallying-places were fixed, no precautions taken for defeat. They planned an offensive against an enormously superior force—that was not likely to prosper; and, at the moment when Hohenlohe and Brunswick might have concentrated on the left bank of the Saale, crushed Napoleon's advance-guard under Lannes, and made him attack across the river, they lost heart, severed their forces, and invited the beating in detail which they duly received. On October 13th their one chance was to gather and fight; the odds were not hopeless, and victory would have straightened out their troubles. They threw away the chance.

Another point worth remark is the uselessness of the "strategical reserve" under Würtemberg. A *tactical* reserve—that is to say, troops held back on the battle-field—to be thrown in at the critical moment, when, as Napoleon said, "the battle was ripe", is of the highest value. Very likely they may turn the issue. But a strategical reserve in the shape of a body of troops *kept away from the battle-field, which is the decisive point, in order to survive in case of defeat*, was a waste of men. If the main army wins, the strategical reserve is not wanted; if the main army is beaten, the strategical reserve is sure to be too small to do anything against the victors. It is bound to be *small*: the larger it is the more likely the main army is to be beaten; and, being small, the enemy will easily destroy it when it comes on it. Bernadotte's one army corps easily broke Würtemberg's force. If it retreats, it does not serve as a rallying-point; if it had been on the battle-field,

it might have turned the scale. Here, again, by keeping Würtemberg's force as a strategical reserve far in the rear the Prussians sinned against one of the chief maxims of war, *the need to concentrate every possible man at the decisive point.*

The most pitiful part was played by the fortresses. It is true that none of them had any chance of being relieved even had they held out stoutly. In the end Napoleon must have taken them all, the more so as they were ill-found in food. It may be argued, as the governors of these fortresses appear to have reasoned, that it was useless to expend lives in a hopeless task, and that out of mercy to the civil population it was well to avoid the horrors of siege and bombardment; but no commander of a fortress has a right to take this view. Consider what might have happened had each fortress held out *for a fortnight only*. This is a moderate allowance, for plainly Napoleon had not enough battering-trains to deal with them all at once. Erfurt would have detained Ney for a time; that would have kept him from going to Magdeburg, and Soult would consequently have been detained to invest that fortress. So Napoleon's left wing would have been brought to a standstill by October 20th. Kustrin, being on the Oder, could have been left to itself for a time, but if Wittenberg had held out, it must have detained part, if not all, of Davout.<sup>1</sup> If

<sup>1</sup> Wittenberg, as possessing an important bridge over the Elbe, was of immediate value. Kustrin might have been neglected safely, but Spandau, Wittenberg, Magdeburg, and Erfurt by holding out would have seriously hindered Napoleon's communications. As it was, directly Erfurt fell, he sent his communications through by that shorter route, and caused Wittenberg and Spandau to be provisioned and fortified as advanced bases.



Spandau had not yielded, it would not have been easy for Lannes to get away so promptly in support of Murat, and this would have given Hohenlohe a better chance had he been resolute to take it. If he had reached Stettin in safety an army corps would have stayed to watch him



The Fortresses—October–November, 1806

there. Even if the fortress had held out after Hohenlohe's surrender, it would probably have detained the rest of Lannes' corps. Thus the troops who joined to run down Blücher would have been seriously reduced in number, and the pursuit have been much more difficult. Once the French had reached Stettin, Blücher indeed could not have escaped, and his force, together with the garrisons of the beleaguered towns, would have been made prisoner. The result might have been the same

in the end, but the end would have come more slowly. Much of the invading army would have been held up for a time.<sup>1</sup>

Of course it would only have been for a time. But time is the first factor in war.<sup>2</sup> "I may often lose a battle," said the twenty-six-year-old General Bonaparte to the Savoyard envoys dawdling over the signing of the Treaty of Cherasco in 1796, "but I shall never lose a

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 135. It is interesting to try to estimate the changes that would have been forced on Napoleon if Erfurt, Wittenberg, Spandau, and Stettin had made reasonable resistance, and to speculate how the French army corps would have been situated on November 1st, *assuming that all the fortified towns had held out for at least a fortnight.*

<sup>2</sup> The best examples of the influence of fortresses gaining time in Napoleon's campaigns are afforded by Mantua in 1796 (where the Austrians mismanaged their opportunities) and Masséna's defence of Genoa in the Marengo campaign (1800). In the war of 1870 it was the collapse of Metz which enabled the Germans to reinforce their army round Paris, and find the men needful to keep the new French armies at a distance from the capital. On the other hand, it was the lengthy defence of Paris which gave France what chance she had—a scanty one—of retrieving the first disasters. Port Arthur forms an admirable instance of the power of a fortress to detain a large fraction of the enemy's forces. Nevertheless, Port Arthur had some abnormal features which must be taken into consideration. To begin with, the enforced evacuation of the place by the Japanese in 1894 had fired them to a resolve to recapture it at any cost. And in the second place, when the Russian Pacific Squadron took refuge in the harbour it became imperative for the Japanese to destroy these vessels before the Baltic Fleet should arrive. This latter factor led to the bloody but successful assault on 203-metre hill, which was required as an observation post for the ship-destroying guns of the Japanese. Incidentally this episode assisted in the general attack against the fortress. Had it not been for these two reasons—one sentimental and political, the other of supreme naval urgency—it is possible that the Japanese would merely have masked Port Arthur, an operation which the peninsula, narrowly constricted at one place, would have favoured.

Hasty conclusions have been drawn from some of the events or the present war that the day of fortresses is over. It is true that some of them have made shorter resistance than was expected. Their failure was due to the ease with which modern traction-engines bring up heavy guns and howitzers, and to the accuracy with which aim can be directed, and, if need be, corrected. Yet it must be remembered that in the long run the advantage of size of gun must lie with the fortress—if size is to prove the determining factor. Further, though the time gained has been short it has been highly valuable, as was proved by Liège and Antwerp. One of the great early successes of the Germans was the speedy taking of Namur.





moment." The Prussian fortresses, too, hardly lost a moment—in surrendering. Erfurt surrendered the very day it was summoned, and set Ney free to go to Magdeburg. Wittenberg had no mind for a siege: it was Saxon. Spandau, only half-gunned it is true,<sup>1</sup> but immensely strong in the midst of lakes and rivers, fell in one day to Lannes under a threat of assault, and set Lannes free to run down Hohenlohe. The Governor of Stettin refused to admit a Prussian brigade that had escaped from the wreck of Hohenlohe on the ground that he had only provisions enough to enable his own garrison to hold out, and the luckless brigade turned back from the Oder to be taken prisoners by Murat directly afterwards at Anklam. Yet this determined governor surrendered the next day to 600 French horse, the advance-guard of Lannes' corps, *without firing a shot*: and Stettin was a first-rate fortress, manned with 150 guns and garrisoned by 6000 men. Equally craven was the spirit shown at Kustrin. Before it, but on the other side of the river—for Kustrin is on an island in the Oder—appeared the advance-guard of Davout, and threatened a severe bombardment: this truculent body consisted of a regiment of infantry with two guns. Kustrin had ninety guns and a garrison of 4000. But the threat was enough. It surrendered (October 31st); being on an island, however, the French captors could not take possession of their prize till the garrison furnished boats to convey them over. Even Magdeburg, which held out the longest, hardly showed much resolution. Ney had no siege-guns, but he collected a few

<sup>1</sup> Yet Napoleon found in Berlin 300 guns of all sorts, 100,000 muskets, and a mass of stores.



mortars; he used the familiar threat—the place would be reduced to ashes if it did not capitulate—and at last he fired a few bombs into it. The populace, in terror, besought the governor, Kleist, to surrender. Ney let him know that every other fortress had fallen, and Kleist with his 22,000 in garrison capitulated to Ney with only 16,000.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the downfall of Prussia in the autumn of 1806. Heine wrote: “L’Empereur n’avait eu qu’à siffler et la Prusse n’existait plus”. Such was the impression given to Europe.

<sup>1</sup> The garrison included nineteen generals whose aggregate age amounted to 1292 years—the average was sixty-eight. Ney was thirty-seven.





## CHAPTER VIII

### Austrian and Prussian Armies

IN the campaigns of Ulm and Jena, and to a less degree in the operations which led up to Tourcoing, one salient fact has been the slowness of the Austrians and Prussians and the speed of the French. Napoleon won Ulm by his soldiers' legs; the whole manœuvre of Jena was made possible because his men could be relied on to move 5 to 10 miles more each day than the Prussians expected. Even at Ulm, when Mack found the hole in the net, he could not manage to break away in time. Their slowness of movement and slowness of decision—paralysis in head and members—gave Napoleon complete victory in each case. There is the fact, or perhaps one should say a fact; but it is natural to ask why they were so slow; why did they take so long to make up their minds, and to do what they had decided; and, further, what other causes there were for their failures against Napoleon?

For example, the following things are often repeated: (1) It is said that the French had invented a new form of massed attack in columns, which was essentially superior to the existing methods of tactics. Is this true?

(2) It is said that the English, in particular Wellington, discovered that "line" would beat the French

"column" if properly handled. Was this "discovered" by us? Was it a discovery?

(3) Napoleon's strategy has been summed up in general as a threat at his enemy's communications, a swift concentration for battle at the decisive point, and a rush to the enemy's capital. If Napoleon first "discovered" the value of speed, concentration, and attacks on communications, he must have been a great discoverer—of the obvious; for these were no novelties in war.

In assenting to statements of this kind we are losing sight of the practical side of war. Every general knew that speed is important; the practical question was—and is—how to get it. Every general knew the value of a stroke at communications; but he knew equally well the practical difficulty, which is, *how to strike at your enemy's communications without first exposing your own*. Again, the value of a concentrated force is as obvious, but the problem was how to concentrate without either doing it too soon (and finding your army begin to run short of food) or doing it too late (and being beaten). Once more, even when a general had decided to concentrate, how was he to make sure that the enemy would be there for him to beat. Probably the enemy would not oblige with a battle, and the concentration would have been made to no purpose. Again, it is easy to reckon how many men can be usefully placed on a line of given length; more than that number will only act as bullet-stoppers. It is plain that all in a line can fire, but only a few in a column; it is also plain that the best-drilled men are likely to keep their heads best in battle and fire straightest and fastest at the right time; so will battles be



won by the simple plan of killing more of the enemy than he can kill of your men. All these things are clear enough, and it is ridiculous to suppose that soldiers did not see them. They are the A B C of their trade. Of course they saw them, but the fact is that their systems only worked well enough to let them attain part of these advantages; the question which they considered was what part should they strive after, and what they should do without. There are always gaps between the ideal and the real, even in the business of methodical slaughter which is called war.

A little description of the practical workings of each of these different armies will reveal, perhaps, not only where they fell short, but why they fell short, and also the means they used to make up their shortcomings, and where their enemies took advantage of their weak points. And so we get back to Von Moltke's definition of the Art of War, the "best possible use of the means at hand for the attainment of the object in view".

The Austrian army of 1805 was the ordinary eighteenth-century army, with some troubles peculiarly its own. As other eighteenth-century armies, it was in the main a "professional" army; its men were paid; their business was soldiering, and it was not merely a business for a time, it was their livelihood. After the Seven Years' War Austria had tried conscription—with substitutes allowed. This, however, lasted but a short time, and was replaced by the Prussian system, which divided the country into cantons, each bound to supply a given number of men, using the ballot if the men could not be obtained otherwise. Mack said in 1792: "No recruit

is taken whose service is required for productive labours; no able-bodied man escapes who can be spared from them". This shows what the Austrian system aimed at, even if it did not hit it. Practically, as usual, the most and the best of the fighting-men came from the frontiers, where war was common and boys grew up used to the handling of arms.<sup>1</sup> Once in the army a man stayed there. Theoretically he might return to civil life; practically he found no job open to him, so he stayed with the colours.

Officers came almost without exception from the aristocratic classes, and thus between them and the rank and file there was a wide gap. One result of this was that there was no intermediate class who could be trusted in the business of supply. Those who looked after contracts for feeding the army and supplying it came from the same class as the men, and as the contractors with whom they had to deal. This opened the door to endless irregularities and dishonesties. Neither Austrian Army Service men nor Austrian contractors were sinners above all others. But the Army Service men, coming from the classes where tips are not thought to be bribes, were ready to take small gifts given to persuade them to gloss over things that fell short or went wrong; and the contractors, being of the same class, found it easy to offer them. No one saw the harm in what he would describe as a little give and take, rules were not kept, the evil spread, and when everyone began to wink at peculations the whole effect was disastrous.

<sup>1</sup> Almost all our Indian army is recruited from the frontiers for the same reason. The fighting spirit is absent from the dwellers in Bengal and the peaceful centre and south.

This corruption and mismanagement of supplies hit the Austrian army particularly hard, because, like all the eighteenth-century armies, it did not live on the country, but was expected to "live on its own", and pay for what it wanted. If the provision-wagons did not appear, soldiers went hungry; if this occurred often they would begin to think of deserting; to avoid this happening their officers shrank from attempting rapid movement or long marches, for this always meant troubles. Eight or ten miles a day, and the provision-wagons would be there; push the troops to double that, and they would be left behind. Even in emergencies it hardly dared to requisition food.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the army was scrupulous in paying, and those who served it with food or help most careful to exact payment beforehand. For example, the ferrymen on the Save struck for higher pay, refusing to carry Austrian troops across to fight the Turks, and the commander had to write to Vienna for money to pay them. The Austrians had to pay rent for camping-grounds and hospitals and quarters, and once in the Netherlands, when the money was left unpaid, the sick and wounded were thrown out into the streets. Even more preposterous, at Mainz,

<sup>1</sup> In the Thirty Years' War armies had lived by pillage, and commonly soon reduced their field of operations to a desert. The inhabitants took refuge in the walled towns which were common, and the soldiers would not waste time on a siege, since if they dawdled they would soon be starving. They moved on to untouched country. In this way the Thirty Years' War meandered through Germany. But in the eighteenth century a milder custom sprang up of paying for food. It was only because of this that the inhabitants tolerated their rulers' habit of making war for objects of personal ambition. War in Germany was often a ruler's game, carried on by *his* private army for *his* own private diversion. It was not a national affair and the ordinary countryman was not interested; so long as he was paid for things he supplied war did not inconvenience him, and he regarded the passing army much as he regards a hunt and pack of hounds. Frederick the Great, however, was less scrupulous than Austrian commanders.

in 1793, when the French were swarming into the town, an Austrian battalion wanted to be rowed across the river. There were boats, but the boatmen asked for payment in advance; the officers had no money, so the battalion surrendered. At every turn a commander was hampered by having to pay for things which to-day he would take without scruple.<sup>1</sup>

Here was one cause of Austrian slowness. They had to stick to the main roads because of their heavy supply-trains. But main roads were few, and thus they either advanced in one column of enormous length or in a number of columns on a very wide front. In either case concentration would be slow, and the far more mobile French could harass them at their pleasure.

Another cause worked the same way. There was in the Austrian army no organized unit higher than the regiment; there were no permanent brigades, divisions, or army corps. This meant that all orders had to be sent from head-quarters to each unit in the command, so long as it was under one commander.<sup>2</sup> The amount of writing which this required from head-quarters can be judged from the requests which Austrian generals sent to

<sup>1</sup> At Epernay (September, 1914) the Germans sent for the Mayor, complained that the gas, water, and electric light had been cut off, and told him that if these were not at once supplied he would be hanged. The next day the Mayor was ordered to supply, within twenty-four hours, 120,000 kilogrammes of corn, 21,000 kilogrammes of bread, 500 kilogrammes of roasted coffee, 10,000 kilogrammes of tinned vegetables, and 12,000 of salt bacon and suet. Everything was found except the bacon and suet, which fell short. The Germans then fined the town 176,000 francs. Contrast eighteenth-century German methods with modern ones. It is fair to add that the money was refunded because the town had treated the German wounded so well.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, a number of units were sometimes detached under one commander; then his staff would have the task of controlling all of these *so long as they were detached with him*. But when they were again concentrated his authority as such ended, and head-quarters again had to give all orders.



Vienna: instead of asking for more troops they pestered for more clerks. On 9th October, 1805, when the French were across the Danube, and the one chance left for the Austrians was to decide what to do and do it at once, Mack defended himself for the failure to hold the Günzburg bridge thus: "At the moment I was busy drawing up the orders for the passage across the river at night *with all the detail that this operation involved. This order took up eight pages, in the whole of which it would be difficult to find a superfluous word.*" One does not wish to dispute Mack's judgment on his own conciseness further than this: it was his business to say to the general commanding the troops at Günzburg: "Arrange for the crossing of the river at such an hour", and that was all. Or take again Tolstoi's memorable description<sup>1</sup> of the midnight scene before the battle of Austerlitz with the Austrian Chief of Staff, Weyrother, reading an endless and complicated set of instructions for the morrow, providing for various alternatives, his voice droning on for an hour; Kutusof, the Commander-in-Chief, asleep in an arm-chair; Buxhovden pretending not to listen; Langeron playing with his snuff-box and making the scornful comment "a geography lesson"; Prszebichewsky holding his hand to his ear like an ear-trumpet; Doktourof occasionally interrupting to have the name of some village repeated to him—*this scene six hours before Napoleon made his paralyzing attack in the one way that Weyrother had not foreseen.*

Endless writing, writing, writing; elaborate schemes for doing everything according to rule; hopeless over-centralization which put everything on the Commander-

<sup>1</sup> From *War and Peace*, Vol. I, "Before Tilsit". It is not romance, but fact.  
(C 754)



in-Chief and left subordinates in the frame of mind of always waiting for orders. Too much regulation at the top and far too little initiative in the subordinates—these clogged the feet of an Austrian army with lead.

Being thus so slow, the Austrians became possessed by another demon of disaster—the belief in the value of the defensive. This they first learnt in the Seven Years' War. Frederick the Great always attacked; he had to do it; the whole summary of the war is comprised in his fierce rushes from one to another of his various foes—southwards against the Austrians, westwards against the French, eastwards against the Russians, throwing each back in turn. But this gave the Austrians time to make ready defensive positions, to dig themselves in: by this means they won the few battles they did win, and in any case they made Frederick pay a heavy price in men for his victories. But this habit of looking always to the defensive robbed the Austrians of all energy. At the critical time their men would not go forward. They had been trained to think of themselves, secure in trenches shooting down their enemy—but this spirit does not win battles.

Such then was the Austrian army; slow and precise, with little initiative, depending on everything going by rule, starving if its wagons were late, waiting if it got no orders, hoping for a kind of battle which the enemy would not give it, and altogether bewildered by anything new.<sup>1</sup> An old Hungarian officer, taken prisoner in 1796, after Lodi, voiced this bewilderment about Napoleon: "It's impossible to make head or tail of this; we have

<sup>1</sup> The Russian army in the Russo-Japanese war was much the same.

to deal with a young man who is at one moment on our front, the next in our rear, the next on both flanks; you can't tell how to post yourself. This way of making war is insufferable; he breaks all the rules."

Austria in Napoleon's time had the reputation of being a great military state, though its army had a certain tradition of failure, or perhaps it were better to say of doing less than was expected of it. Far other was Prussia. This state, in Europe's eyes, stood for military efficiency and success. If a military reformer of 1790 wished for a model he looked to the Prussian army. Here he drew examples of victory against odds, steadiness under fire, discipline, endurance, readiness, and speed. Yet this army, when tried at Jena, broke down even more suddenly than Austria had done.

This at first suggests that none of the old military ideas would stand against the novelties of the Revolution. Yet such a notion would be entirely wrong. For example, Frederick's army faced punishment without flinching in a way that no Revolutionary army did.<sup>1</sup> At Torgau it lost 30 per cent and won, at Zorndorf 37 per cent and won, and at Kunersdorf it lost 48 per cent before it at last gave way. See, again, what happened at Prague in 1757. Frederick intended a flank attack, but the Austrians were warned in time, formed a fresh front, and left the Prussians to advance up a bare slope<sup>2</sup> nearly 1300 yards long. The Austrians deployed some 10,000 men—these standing three deep—and thirty-eight heavy guns. Round-shot,

<sup>1</sup> The average losses in the battles of the Seven Years' War were 17 per cent; in the battles of the French Revolution, before Napoleon, about 3 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> Of the Ziscaberg, the hill named after the blind general who never lost a battle.

grape, and at close range case-shot and a storm of bullets swept the slope; yet the Prussians marched up steadily, to be mowed down time and again, till at last the steadiness of the Prussian fire prevailed, and the Austrians gave way. That day cost Frederick a fifth of his whole army: several battalions lost 50 per cent. Yet the thing to remember is not the losses; it is that in face of such a fire, and in days when it was impossible for artillery to beat down the enemy's fire with shrapnel, Prussian discipline carried the men up the hill, and they won. Twelve thousand out of 60,000 may seem a heavy price for victory, but it is far worse to pay half the number for defeat.

Prussian discipline then was—as discipline always is—of first-rate value in war. And it is remarkable what the Prussians attained. Their men were partly volunteers, partly conscripts. There were, as in all countries, a number of men who preferred the more adventurous and restless life of an army to the humdrum occupations of civil life, and there were also a number of recruits from other German States in Prussian service; but the bulk of the army was provided by the “cantons” or regimental districts, each of which had to find and equip so many battalions, getting the men voluntarily if they could, but in the last resource by the ballot. It was then largely a “conscript” army. In the country districts it was easy to set men free for harvest and busy farming seasons, and make them soldiers the rest of the year; but in the towns it was harder, and the towns were accordingly often allowed to pay money with which the State hired “foreigners”. But though the men were fairly plentiful

they were not intelligent; in status they were serfs; they came mostly from the plough-tail. Yet, working as they usually did in a flatter, evener country than did Austrians or Frenchmen, they attained an amazing exactitude of drill and dressing. They could march steadily in line, keeping touch so exactly that, when they halted, each man had just room to go through the complicated movements of loading his musket swiftly and evenly, so as to get off five shots a minute. In making an attack, they were expected to advance two deep or three deep, *with muskets shouldered to prevent premature firing*. The ideal was that they should come up to effective range (200 yards), and then with their first volley at a target hardly possible to miss they would cut the enemy to pieces. Of course, this was an ideal. They sometimes failed to get so close, but if they succeeded the effect of such a volley was paralysing. At the battle of Crefeld the first Prussian volley struck down 75 per cent of the enemy who received it. Nor did the Prussians fail at Jena for lack of their old gallantry; witness the infantry who, carefully and scrupulously dressed in line, moved steadily up to within 200 yards of the village of Vierzehnheiligen, which was strongly occupied by Lannes' skirmishers, safely sheltered behind walls and loopholed houses; they stood like a rock for nearly two hours in the open, never wavering though the line was broken into great gaps as the men fell, and yet at the end the survivors were volleying away with mechanical accuracy.

It is plain enough that the Prussians knew the value of "line" as giving every man a chance to fire. Yet even their discipline could not attain the ideal of three



deep, where the theory was either that the front rank, after standing to load, would drop on their knee to fire, and then let all three lines get off a volley together; or, in a later notion, that the third rank should reload the discharged muskets, and hand them to those in front. Nothing could persuade the men to kneel again once they had stood up, or to part with their own muskets. By degrees the third line was given up as useless; often it was detached to act as skirmishers or light troops. Two deep gave every man a chance to fire, and it reduced the number of "bullet-stoppers".<sup>1</sup> Thus *the Prussians economized men*. They attained the maximum of fire in an attack with the minimum of target. They could often carry out an attack with 15,000 men to the mile or less; whereas Napoleon in his later days massed 50,000 and sometimes more.

This steadiness of movement and use of line was rendered possible by two things. The first was *discipline*, bred by much drill. It was not that the Prussians used any intricate evolutions on the battle-field. They practised them in peace because men get weary then of doing the very simple things only. The best guarantee that easy things will be done in the confusion of a battle-field is the knowledge that the men can do far more difficult ones. In war only the simple things were tried, and the Prussians carried them out so certainly and so inexorably that nothing seemed capable of stopping them. But the second essential, the thing that made these movements in line possible, was *the excellence of their cavalry*. The men knew they would be covered. Perhaps the greatest of all

<sup>1</sup> I.e. men who can be shot, but cannot shoot.



cavalry exploits stands to Prussian credit. At Rossbach (November, 1757) Frederick caught the French army on the march. Seydlitz swept down on it over the crest of the Polzenberg with only thirty-three squadrons backed by seven battalions and eighteen guns; Soubise's 60,000 men were routed in three-quarters of an hour. They lost 10,000 in killed, wounded, and prisoners, all their baggage and seventy-two guns. The Prussian loss was just over 500 men. Throughout the Seven Years' War it was this cavalry superiority which gave the infantry confidence to manœuvre in line.<sup>1</sup>

But this wonderful efficiency of the Seven Years' War had declined by 1806. Outwardly the army was the same: the discipline of the infantry was there, but the drill had gone wooden, and in more senses than one the army had grown old. The generals were old, and the regimental officers far too old. Prussia had been left so paralysed with debt from the Seven Years' War that all sorts of economies were practised, and the men got too little training. About half of the army was either with the colours for six weeks' training only, each year, or, if living in barracks, the men were allowed to practise civilian trades. Officers had little experience in working with their units in manœuvres, and these manœuvres had degenerated into big reviews. The cavalry had been split up; all mounted men had too little horse work; the horses were short of condition. The skirmishing and

<sup>1</sup> Frederick was most particular to keep his cavalry up to the highest standard, and quick to complain of defects. He sent the Baireuth Hussars—a crack regiment—to three months extra drill in 1754, although at Hohenfriedberg their conduct had been most distinguished. See also, in the *Leipzig Campaign*, "Special Campaign Series", by Colonel Maude (p. 13), the address he delivered to his cavalry at Potsdam.

light-infantry work in the Seven Years' War had been mainly done by irregulars enlisted for the war. When they disappeared they left behind them no tradition of how to do things. All through, the army suffered from the fact that there was not enough teaching. It was no one's direct business to teach those beneath him. The artillery was divided up chiefly into battalion guns, and the whole service was somewhat despised in comparison with the cavalry and foot. Its officers were kept out of the higher commands, which Napoleon said was "idiotic". In brief, the elasticity and vigour had gone, the whole machine was stiff, and, above all, there was not a man at the head of it. Frederick might have been beaten at Jena, but he would never have divided his force in the face of the enemy, never have permitted the endless talk at the councils of war, which only made clear to everyone the dangers of every course, never have let Lannes cross the Saale without a blow, and never have let his infantry stand for two hours firing without ordering a charge. Nor, again, would he have permitted the insubordination and disloyalty with which Massenbach and Hohenlohe treated their commander;<sup>1</sup> nor, again, had he been there, would the sight of one wounded man riding into Jena have caused a panic,<sup>2</sup> nor would the men have lost heart because the staff had lost its head. Prussian soldiers trusted "Fritz", and they did not trust the generals of 1806, and they were right in each case. They were horribly beaten at Jena, but it was not the fault of

<sup>1</sup> They appear to have imagined they were loyally obeying Brunswick when they issued an instruction to their troops that no one was to make fun of Brunswick's orders.

<sup>2</sup> As happened on October 11th.

the men, or of Prussian ideals of discipline. It was a breakdown in what should have been the brain of the army that ruined the members.

That an army has failed because its leaders have blundered, its officers grown irresolute, and its nation has become unwilling to face the sacrifices needed for war is not, however, likely to be a popular conclusion with either leaders, officers, or nation; and after Jena there were many Germans who declared that the French system was altogether superior to the Prussian, especially in its handling of troops in the field. The "line" was discredited, the "column" cried up. Certainly Jena showed a superiority of the French; it is worth while to see in what that lay.

## CHAPTER IX

### French Armies and their Opponents

IN 1792 and 1793 France had, as it were, to begin at the very root of warfare, to crush her enemies by number and what we may call brute force, since skill, training, and organization were all in the scale against her. To do it she created the first example of the "modern" army—the nation in arms—but her problem was to use it. Her half-trained levies could not be manœuvred with Austrian and Prussian accuracy; therefore the ideal of the steady advance in line had to be given up, not because French officers disbelieved in it, but because the men would not do it, or, having deployed from column into line, would not go forward and would probably break back. If a line gives way—as these Revolutionary lines often did—the battle is not necessarily lost, provided there are plenty more men to take the place of those who have broken. But it would be lost if those breaking back are allowed to throw into confusion the supports coming up. Thus the French found it impossible to move up a second line in support of the first, *because if the first broke back it did so through the second and involved it in its own ruin.* Hence the French took to moving up their supporting troops in small battalion columns of about 400 or 500

men—if the first line broke it could escape by the gaps. So, as a practical means to an end, came in the invention of the attack in column. How it would be used would depend on how the battle went. If the first line held on, the second would deploy and join it; if the first line broke, probably the enemy was so hot on its heels that the supporting columns had to go in as columns<sup>1</sup> with the bayonet. Further, as the Revolutionary troops were badly drilled, when they did deploy they did so in an irregular way, and they attacked, not in stately lines but in what looked to Prussian and Austrian eyes to be a ragged crowd. This, however, was not intentional; it was the best the French could do; they would have kept accurate touch if they could; they could not, so they came on in a swarm. Here then is the genesis of the attack in column and the French advance *en débâcle*.

But the point is that they did come on. They had plenty of men, and their generals held lives cheap. Besides, courage and confidence speedily grew; the French infantry came to expect victory, and fighting so often and so successfully they became first-rate fighting-men. Having the advantage of numbers, and being superior in *moral*, the fact that they were less well drilled did not affect the result. But when they won their battles advancing in column, and coming swarming on in this straggling and seemingly undisciplined fashion, people began to think that it was the system that won the battles. That was a mistake; it was the men. The system had no merit, except this—it is true it is a supreme merit—it

<sup>1</sup> In column they had less to fear from hostile cavalry, and the French Revolutionary armies were always weak in cavalry.



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was the "best possible use of the means at hand to attain the end in view".

Then the whole thing came into the capable hands of Napoleon. Before he became First Consul the plan of conscription had been put on a methodical footing. This was done in 1798; all unmarried French citizens between twenty and twenty-five were liable to serve, the actual number taken each year being the subject of an annual law. If the class aged twenty to twenty-one did not yield enough, the class twenty-one to twenty-two was called on, and so on. Thus year by year the French armies were filled, and there was practically no limit of time of service.<sup>1</sup> So there would be plenty of old soldiers to stiffen new levies, and Napoleon—who observed that he could use 25,000 men a month—drew men who would give him a superiority in number. As his dominions widened, so his recruiting-grounds widened also—contingents of subject States and allies swelled his armies. When he marched into Russia in 1812 he had with him Prussians and Germans from almost every German State, Austrians, Italians, and Dutch, and even unwilling Portuguese. But, as will be seen from the note, he drew more and more on France as years went on.<sup>2</sup>

This gave Napoleon men, and, as has been seen, he vastly outnumbered Mack in 1805<sup>3</sup> and the Prussians in

<sup>1</sup> Normally it was five years, but once with the colours men tended to stay on.

<sup>2</sup> The annual levy for 1800 was 30,000; for each year from 1801 till 1804, 60,000; 1805, 240,000; 1806 and 1807, 80,000; 1808, 240,000; 1809, 76,000; 1810, 160,000; 1811, 120,000; 1812, 237,000; 1813, 1,100,000. When, as in heavy years, the annual supply was not enough the levy went back and raked in those who had escaped in earlier years.

<sup>3</sup> He did not outnumber the total of Austrians and Russians combined, but they never managed to combine.

1806. But he further used his numbers to give him a "moral" advantage. The usual Napoleonic attack was a swarm of *tirailleurs* so vigorous and pervading that his columns were able to come up under their cover without receiving much notice or punishment. The enemy, already hard pressed by the *tirailleurs*, shrank at the sight of such huge masses so close on them, and, instead of realizing that these columns were first-rate targets, would waver and break; the columns pushed on, and the battles were won.

Napoleon understood well that there are more ways of beating the enemy than by killing him:<sup>1</sup> he knew how to shake his nerve. And later he went further with this by his fierce artillery attacks of concentrated fire at short range. But this was a later development. Its perfecting was shown in Senarmont's "case-shot" attack at Friedland in 1807.

We may reckon then that it was not the system of the French which won battles, but their number, their spirit, their experience, and the way Napoleon used these things. But there were other advantages that they had.

To begin with, they were soldiers in full practice, led by officers who had risen by merit. Some of these officers were often rough, ignorant,<sup>2</sup> low-bred, greedy, even dishonest. But whether they had survived from the Royal army or were newcomers of the Revolution, they rose and kept their place only because they were *leaders*; they

<sup>1</sup> Though over and over again he insisted on a superiority of fire as the decisive factor.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the Revolutionary general who "wished that the devil had flown away with the man who invented writing".

could get the most out of their men, and their men trusted them and worked for them. And from the best of them came that mass of marshals who, perhaps, owed more to Napoleon than they would have cared to admit, but who were, most of them, extremely capable subordinates, quite prepared to "play the game" to the best of their powers. They were often fiercely jealous of each other; they quarrelled violently in Spain; but with Napoleon to direct them they were first rate. As a body they far surpassed the generals in the service of the Allies.

Again, Napoleon's genius for war knew how to use such men. While Austrian armies had no permanent arrangement of anything above the regiment and brigade, and Prussia did not go beyond divisions, Napoleon's army was organized in *army corps*. When for any reason Austrians or Prussians wanted a detached force, men would be put together to form it, but the arrangement was for the moment only. Regiments found themselves now under one general, now under another. But Napoleon, knowing how much more was to be got out of men by leaders they were used to, gave army corps to his marshals, and, so far as might be, kept the same men together in each army corps. This not only gave him better fighters, but *it gave him speed*. Instead of eight or fourteen pages of writing "with no superfluous word", Napoleon dictated his orders to his chief of staff, Berthier, Berthier passed them on to the corps commanders, each of them in his turn to his staff, who sent them to generals of divisions, and each general of division to his brigadiers. Head-quarters did not waste time writing elaborate orders

for a regiment to cross a bridge.<sup>1</sup> So the paralysis and congestion and delays which made the Austrian army so slow were unknown to the French. There are many versions of the old story which tells how fault-finding in high places get transmitted down till someone clouts the drummer-boy's head, or kicks the battery-mule. They embody sound military principles. They teach the value of decentralization and individual responsibility—long words which only say that in war there is no time to waste, and everyone's business is not only to do his best himself, but to see that those under him do it too.

This system of army corps under commanders, who were responsible indeed to Napoleon and under his guiding, but who were left to arrange their own means of carrying out his orders, made for speed in two ways. There was less waste of time waiting for orders from head-quarters, because head-quarters had fewer to issue, and what were issued were brief and general, instead of being packed with detail; and, further, these army corps, consisting of units used to work together in war, worked easily and confidently. There are plenty of instances of bad staff work in the French army as in other armies<sup>2</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> Oddly enough on one occasion when an elaborate order—it was in thirty-one paragraphs—was issued for crossing the Danube from the isle of Lobau to the battle-field of Wagram, the French staff blundered. The order sent Davout, who was to form the right, to the middle bridge, and Oudinot, who was to form the centre, to the bridge on the right. Although ten copies of the order were sent, the mistake was not noticed, and Davout's and Oudinot's corps crossed in the night, causing serious disorder. It will be remarked, however, that this was a big operation involving several army corps: the affair at Günzburg which took up Mack's time was a small one. [See also next note.]

<sup>2</sup> For example, in the march from the Channel to Ulm the orders given would have caused a crossing between Davout's and Soult's corps, had not Davout pointed out the mistake. Again, Berthier told Murat to be "in force" at two different places on the same day (13th October, 1805), and Davout was ordered to concentrate at two different places (October, 1806); in 1806 Murat was placed in interim command of the army at Würzburg over Berthier's head, but Berthier was not told of this, so for a few days



indeed the staffs were a weak point in the armies of the French Empire—but the faulty orders did less harm, because they came to men who were accustomed to act for themselves, and who used their sense and experience in war to carry out what they knew to be Napoleon's general ideas.

Again, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic armies owed much of their speed to the fact that they made war support war by living on the country. This acted two ways. In the first place, they got rid of the excess of wagons which an Austrian army trailed about with it. Of course they had to have transport—every army has; it wants ammunition and rations for emergencies; when an army is concentrated to fight it cannot attend to the business of collecting food. But it reckoned on finding the main part of its supplies from the enemy's country, and its wagons were cut down to a minimum. That gave it a second advantage; it enabled it to strike easily at its enemy's flank or communications, since it could reckon on getting food on the way, and if the enemy retaliated by a stroke at its communications, the stroke was far less deadly. Two days before the battle of Jena the Prussian cavalry did cut the French communications on the southern side of the Thuringian Forest, but this did not affect the French movements at all. They were living on the country, and victory at Jena disposed of all danger.

both issued orders. Bernadotte's instructions (which he obeyed with exactness) kept him away from both Jena and Auerstädt, and Napoleon blamed him fiercely, practically on the ground that he ought to have known better than remain doing nothing. Ney, on the other hand, disobeyed the letter of his instructions in order to get up promptly to the battle-field of Jena, and came in at the nick of time. Yet the same commander, in 1813, being told *to be on the Prussian right flank by 11 a.m.* at the battle of Bautzen, got there at 10 a.m., and *halted*. Napoleon did not know he was there, the Prussians took the alarm, and the whole attack failed. Still, this is a rare example of where a marshal did not act in the spirit of Napoleon's plan.



Thus the French armies had a nimbleness which neither the Austrians nor Prussians could rival. They were able to make long marches at high speed; they could move easily on flank or rear; if they were threatened with a counter-stroke they decamped, leaving little behind for their enemy to fall upon; if the enemy concentrated to fight, *the French could always concentrate more quickly*. Having the advantage of numbers, if the enemy stood they would surround or outflank him; if he fought, they would beat him; if he retreated, they would out-march him; if he remained scattered, they would cut him up in detail. The secret mainly lay in this, that through experience they had developed a way of making war which went farther to secure mobility and superiority at the decisive point than the old eighteenth-century systems, and through constant practice in campaigning they had a rough-and-ready skill in war which their opponents lacked. When, in the few days preceding Jena, things went wrong, the Prussians began to distrust their officers, and to ask themselves if so much confusion and marching and counter-marching did not mean disaster; the result was the panic on the afternoon of October 11th, starting with the sight of one Hussar with bandaged head, who rode furiously into Jena from Weimar—the one direction from which the French could not possibly be coming—shouting: “Get back! The French are on us!” But Napoleon’s men were used to confusion of war; they had seen things straighten out; they did not expect everything to go as on parade; consequently even when the whole order of the French movement was changed on October 12th, 1806, there was no loss of confidence.

Ney, Soult, Murat, and the Guard were on the march most of the night of the 13th, but that did not hinder them from fighting confidently on the 14th.

And not least of the advantages of the French must be reckoned Napoleon himself at the head, and this quite apart from his genius for war. The point is that *a soldier was at the head of the French nation, and he could turn its resources to his purposes*. Being a soldier, he would not let political aims interfere with military needs. There were no delays while kings, cabinets, Aulic Council, or Supreme Juntas were consulted. There were few councils of war.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Scharnhorst's maxim was fulfilled, and whatever was intended was carried out with unity and energy.

What has been said about the French advantages becomes even more evident when we turn from the Central European campaigns to what happened in Spain, since there, for one reason and another, the French were faced with a set of conditions in which they failed. These conditions were such that they deprived the French of the chief advantage of speed which they had hitherto enjoyed.

Spain was much less fertile, had fewer resources, and was less thickly populated than Saxony, Bavaria, and Austria. Thus it was far more difficult for the French to make war support war. The only way for them to live was to scatter widely. In fact, operations were only possible for a concentrated force after long and careful

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon hardly ever summoned them. He called one together in 1796, when he had been beaten at Caldiero, and was in grave danger of having his communications cut at the base of Lake Garda. It declared for a retreat. He did retreat—in appearance—but immediately turned off down the Adige, making a counter-threat at the Austrian communications, and fought and won the battle of Arcola.

collection of supplies. Consequently a great part of the fighting in the Peninsula consisted of brief spurts of activity on the part of the French, which could only last just so long as supplies lasted. It might be supposed that this would affect both sides in the same way, and to a certain extent this is true. The side that had gathered its supplies before the other could often catch its enemy unawares, and this would cut both ways. But the British had three advantages. They were fighting in a friendly country, the French in a hostile one—and this hostility was active and universal; they paid for supplies, which was expensive but did cause the country-folk to bring them in, while the French tried to obtain supplies by requisition, which was difficult in a country so barren as Spain; finally, the command of the sea enabled them to change their base as they might require. This gave the British and Allied forces the chance of concentrating first, and that is how Wellington contrived to take Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz by a pounce before the scattered French could concentrate to drive him off.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Illustrations of the value of the command of the sea will be found in later chapters. An example of the French trouble with supplies is worth quoting. In 1814 Marmont (in command of the army of Portugal) wrote to Berthier: "I found not a grain of wheat in the magazines, not a sou in the treasury . . . we could only get food for daily consumption in our own cantonments by using armed force. . . . The English army is always concentrated and can always be moved because it has an adequate supply of money and transport. Seven or eight thousand pack-mules bring up its daily food—hay for the cavalry on the banks of the Coa and Agueda has actually been sent out from England. His Majesty may judge from this fact the comparison between them and us. We have not four days' food in any of our magazines, we have no transport, we cannot draw requisitions from the most wretched village without sending a foraging party 200 strong." Jourdan also observed: "What would do for a short campaign in Lombardy or Bavaria was hopeless for central Spain". Marmont was wrong on some points: the hay was sent to Lisbon, but not up-country to the Coa, and Wellington certainly had not an "adequate supply of money". Both the British and Portuguese armies were constantly in arrears of pay, and there was little specie to pay for supplies. Wellington grumbled bitterly about this, but it was almost impossible to get coin in England to send to him.

Again, owing to their better system of army corps, the French had hitherto saved time in transmitting orders. But in Spain the whole people were actively hostile. Every road was watched, every village had its handful of *guerrilleros*, every Frenchman who passed did so at the risk of his life. The result was that not only convoys were cut off, but the French troops were scattered here, there, and everywhere, trying to hold down the country. Every orderly needed at least a squadron as an escort, and, even so, messages often failed to arrive. The result was that when French orders for a concentration were issued, they travelled slowly and often went astray, while the British forces could communicate safely and promptly.<sup>1</sup> Further, when orders did come to hand, the French forces, beset by enemies at every step, moved slowly. They had to be on their guard against ambush. They were harassed at the passes and at night; they had to brush away constant swarms of an enemy who, to use

<sup>1</sup> In 1812, when Wellington's campaign of Salamanca was just beginning, and it was essential for Marmont at Valladolid to keep in touch with Joseph and his chief of staff Jourdan at Madrid, Jourdan wrote on June 30th to Marmont to say that his latest despatch from him was sixteen days old, being dated June 14th. Marmont's later letters of June 22nd and June 24th had never arrived: they had in fact been captured and sent to Wellington. In this letter of June 30th Jourdan indicated that he would not be able to send men to help Marmont. This letter did arrive, though it only reached Marmont on July 12th, *having taken twelve days to cover the 150 miles from Madrid to Valladolid via Segovia*. On receiving it Marmont decided that it was useless to wait longer, since he would not be reinforced, and accordingly, on July 15th, he began his advance from the Douro which drove Wellington back to Salamanca. Meantime Joseph and Jourdan had changed their minds; on July 9th they resolved to march to help Marmont; they gathered 14,000 men and set off from Madrid on July 21st. Marmont, however, *never got any despatch telling him that they were coming*, and hustled forward, trying to outflank Wellington, which proceeding led to his utter defeat at Salamanca on July 22nd, the day after Joseph and Jourdan had started from Madrid. Had he known they were coming he would have waited for them, and they would have made his army much stronger than Wellington's.



Mr. Oman's apt image, was like a bubble of quicksilver breaking up under the hand, leaving nothing to grasp, and rolling away in tiny and uncatchable globules, to unite again later on. Thus the advantage of speed passed from them to the other side.

Here, then, the French first felt that obstacle of intense national patriotism, which made every Spaniard—not merely every Spanish soldier—an enemy. Hitherto countries which the French had overrun submitted when their capital was taken and their field-armies destroyed. Not so Spain. Her towns were so few that their capture mattered little, and the land is so split up into provinces by great mountain ranges that one district felt no pressure because the French had occupied its neighbour. That Castile was conquered and Madrid occupied mattered nothing to Catalonia, or Galicia, or Andalusia. The French, being faced with what was to them an unreasonable warfare kept up fiercely by people who ought to have submitted when they were (in French eyes) beaten, endeavoured to put down these scattered local fighters by using great severity. The Spaniards were as merciless, and so between Spaniard and Frenchman there grew up, not merely a feeling of hostility, but of bitter hatred,<sup>1</sup> which deepened as the war went on, and it inspired Spain to a stubborn fury which added intensely to the difficulties of the French.

Again, they had lost their old virtue of carrying little baggage. Their discipline, never strict, had relaxed, and

<sup>1</sup> This was in sharp contrast to the good fellowship which marked the fighting between French and English from Talavera onward. In the latter stages of the war the soldiers on each side often managed to let the other know whether serious business was on hand, or whether it was only "bickering", to use Mr. Oman's phrase.



they were in the habit of plundering. From marshals down to the rank and file all tried to carry off something, whether they filled pocket and knapsack or trains of wagons. This did not so much matter as long as they were advancing; but in retreats it was paralyzing. Dupont's disastrous surrender at Baylen was largely due to the immense train of plunder he was carrying; again, the roads round Vitoria were choked with French spoil. This habit<sup>1</sup> clogged the feet of the French armies more and more.

Again, in Germany the French had had two other advantages. They had bigger armies and one man at the head of them. But in Spain they lost these advantages. It was not that they were short of men in Spain. *They almost always had far more men than the Allies.* But their numbers were so eaten up in garrisons, in guarding lines of communications, in chasing bands of guerrilleros, that they never could bring into action any really big force on the battle-fields. Again, what chance they had of doing so was often spoiled by quarrels and jealousy among the Marshals themselves. Each hung on to his own province; if he left it he felt sure an insurrection would break out in his absence, and he would be blamed for it. Besides, if

<sup>1</sup> In which Napoleon himself was a leader. In 1809 he made Joseph send him fifty pictures—he stipulated for the very best from the Madrid galleries, telling Joseph that he might recoup himself by plundering private collections. Little wonder that others copied him. Marmont had his service of silver plate with him at Salamanca, and Wellington captured it. In 1812 Marmont, being short of horses, requisitioned the numerous riding-horses which his officers kept—contrary to regulations. Mr. Oman relates the story of an old general of Revolutionary days, Taupin by name, who declared to his brigade officers (from the pulpit of a church where he had assembled them) that he would make an end of all luxuries. "In 1793", he cried, "we were allowed a haversack as our only baggage, a stone as our only pillow." But in fact this Spartan veteran himself had at the time six baggage mules to carry his private belongings.

he joined another Marshal who was his senior, he would have to put himself under his orders. He preferred to go his own way, and leave his colleague to find an escape from his troubles for himself. Here, above all, the presence of Napoleon was missed. He alone could have made them work together.<sup>1</sup> As that was so, it becomes still more amazing that he left Spain in January, 1809, *and never returned*, in spite of the fact that in 1810 and 1811 he had no fighting elsewhere. Did he fail to grasp the difficulties in Spain, or *did he realize that they were beyond even his powers?* Neither explanation is satisfactory; we cannot imagine Napoleon continuously stupid over a matter of warfare, nor can we believe that he lacked confidence in himself. Yet one or other it must have been.

Yet more, not only was Napoleon no help, but he was a hindrance. He refused to put all the operations in Spain under one commander, trying instead to direct them all himself from wherever he might be, Paris, or Central Germany, or even Poland. Even if communications had been fairly open in Spain this would have been so difficult as to be well-nigh impossible to do with success. Napoleon's instructions were bound to be three weeks behind the time—often three months. But it was commonly impossible for the French to keep communications open at all. When Soult advanced into Galicia in 1809 nothing was heard of him by the rest of the French for a month;

<sup>1</sup> But not always. In flat contradiction to his orders Lefebvre attacked Blake at Zornoza on December 31st, 1808, and drove that commander out of the dangerous position in which he was, where Napoleon had hoped to surround him. Blake fell back on Bilbao and saved himself. Again, Lefebvre, in defiance of orders, marched off on a madcap career to Avila in 1809, and so exposed Madrid. Napoleon superseded him this time.

when Masséna invaded Portugal he was for three months without support, or even news of any kind. Thus Napoleon's plan of sending orders to his commanders broke down utterly, since they often did not get the orders, or if the orders went through they were belated, valueless, and even disastrous. Further, Napoleon knew little of Spain, and took small pains to find out. His instructions—based on maps, and on what might have been done in countries where roads were fair, supplies plentiful, and the population not actively hostile—were often quite preposterous when applied to Spain. Thus, while in Germany he had insisted "that what was agreed on should be carried out with unity and energy", his influence in the Peninsular War proved distracting and paralyzing.<sup>1</sup>

Speed, mobility, power of concentration, superiority in number, singleness in aim—all distinguishing marks of the French during the great years of 1805-7 in Germany—were lost to them in Spain. And one thing more failed them: their battle-tactics failed. Their plan of an advance headed by a swarm of *tirailleurs* covering a line or a double line of small columns depended for

<sup>1</sup> For example, on November 20th, 1811, Napoleon ordered Marmont in Leon to send a force to help Suchet in Catalonia; Marmont got the order on December 13th, and the force, under Montbrun, marched on December 29th. On January 8th Wellington, hearing of this and other French movements eastward, suddenly began the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo, and Marmont's force was left too weak to interfere even if he had heard in time; as a matter of fact he did not hear that the siege was begun till January 14th, though he was only a hundred miles away at Valladolid. Again, on January 5th, Napoleon, in happy ignorance, wrote to Marmont: "The English will confine themselves to defend Portugal: *you can wait till June*". But Ciudad Rodrigo was taken on January 18th, and Badajoz on April 6th, and Napoleon's orders had forbidden Marmont to keep his troops so disposed that he could help Soult in time to protect Badajoz if Wellington attacked it. Thus Napoleon's orders, founded on out-of-date information and issued from a distance, were to a great extent the cause of the French losing both Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz.

success on the moral impression it made upon the enemy. In Italy this moral impression had been made upon the Austrians, though Napoleon's successes were really won more by his manœuvres—and his enemies' mistakes—than by tactical methods in battle.<sup>1</sup> The campaigns of Ulm, Austerlitz, Jena, and Friedland deepened and confirmed this impression—that the French were invincible. But the British soldier had never been taught this lesson, and he refused to learn it. He was not impressed by the sight of the French columns—except as a target. Drawn up in line of two deep a British battalion of 800 men could fire 800 shots to its volley; but the French battalion, advancing in column of companies or double companies, with a front of 40 or 80 men, was simply swept away by the British fire, to which it could only reply with 80 to 160 shots. *For firing purposes it was outnumbered 10 or 5 to 1.* The result, provided the line stood firm, could not be doubtful. General Foy, who saw most of the fighting in Spain, confessed that *for a set battle on a limited front with equal numbers* British infantry was superior to the French. He made the confession to his private diary only, and this was not made public till 1900. But from Vimiero to Vitoria the fact was demonstrated in every Peninsular battle.

Line then re-asserted its old power against column. Wellington demonstrated an old principle which had been

<sup>1</sup> At Castiglione he had a concentrated force, a central position, and reserves coming up at the right moment. At Arcola the ground prevented the use of anything but columns, the battle being chiefly fought along the roads leading through a morass. At Rivoli the Austrians attacked him on three sides without being able to co-operate, and their chief attack had no guns. At Marengo he was nearly beaten, because, for once, he let the enemy concentrate first; but he won the battle by overthrowing the great Austrian column that was pressing the pursuit.



lost sight of. He did not discover it, but he applied it skilfully. The problem was to ensure that at the critical moment the line should be steady—it must not have been shaken beforehand. This steadiness he owed partly to his men, for the British eighteenth-century infantry was as cool, resolute, and unshakeable as were Frederick the Great's Prussians. Take the story of Lord Cutts's attack upon the village of Blenheim. The village was palisaded and held by 10,000 French. Cutts's attack—the Guards leading, the 10th, 21st, and 24th regiments following—crossed the shallow ditch of the Nebel under fire of grape from four French guns; but this died down as the British drew near Blenheim, since the village was in the way. Without firing a shot the troops marched up through the 150 yards of long grass that severed them from the row of silent, grim, watching palisades. The British had orders to take the place with the bayonet; the French held their fire. The attack came on steadily to a distance of little more than a cricket-pitch, and then the long-expected French volley crashed out, and one man in every three of the advancing line was killed or disabled. Even so the British did not fire. They still marched steadily on, till their leader, Row, touched the palisade with his sword. This was their agreed signal; they fired and began to wrestle with the palisades to tear them down with their hands. Another and another outburst of fire came from the French, and the British broke in disorder. As an attack it perished: as an example of valour and discipline it lives for ever.

Or, once more, remember what happened at Fontenoy. There, the Dutch and Austrian attacks on the village of



Fontenoy and the Redoubt d'Eu failing, Cumberland sent his centre (three battalions of Guards, fourteen of the line and some Hanoverians) against the French centre. In three lines<sup>1</sup> with drums beating and shouldered arms, with slow and measured step, these 15,000 men set out on the 1000 yards of gentle, bare uphill towards the French entrenchments. They were under a cross-fire from the French batteries on either side—a cross-fire which, as they advanced, became a flanking fire and eventually a fire into them from behind. The steady step never hurried or slackened, though the men fell “strewing the sward behind them with scarlet”, says Mr. Fortescue,<sup>2</sup> “like some mass of red blossoms that floats down a lazy stream and sheds its petals as it goes”. At 100-yards range they came in sight of the French, the *Maison du Roi* in blue, the Swiss red-coats, and the picked regiments of the line in white. On went the British, still with shouldered arms, to 50 yards. Then they halted, and out stepped Lord Charles Hay of the 1st Guards, flask in hand, and ceremoniously toasted the enemy. “Gentlemen,” he cried to them, “I hope you are going to wait for us to-day, and not swim the Scheldt, as you swam the Main at Dettingen”—then, turning to his own men, he said: “There are the French Guards, and I hope you are going to beat them to-day”, and he called for a cheer for the French which was given lustily. The French officers called for a cheer in reply, and presented their muskets. Still the British did not move, but with shouldered arms stared steadily at the rows of muzzles. “For what we are about to receive, O

<sup>1</sup> They started in two lines, but, finding themselves crowded, the Hanoverians in perfect order dropped into a third line.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the British Army*, Hon. J. W. Fortescue.

Lord, make us truly thankful" shouted a soldier—and before the laugh died down the French fired. Then, the British muskets, so long shouldered, were at last levelled, and crash on crash their volleys rolled along the line, two battalions loading while the third fired. Down dropped the whole French front line to the first discharge; the British kept up a ceaseless volleying inferno of fire, the men perfectly in hand, the officers tapping with their canes muskets that seemed too high. On came two charges of French cavalry, but the troops never moved; "it was like charging two flaming fortresses", said one who was there. So it went on. Mr. Fortescue sums it all up thus: "The brigade formed under a cross-fire of artillery, remained halted under the same fire, advanced slowly for half a mile in perfect order under the same fire, and marched up to within pistol-shot of the French infantry to receive their volley before they fired a shot. They shattered the French battalions to pieces, repulsed three attacks of cavalry, halted under a heavy cannonade, retired to some distance and re-formed under a cross-fire, advanced again with artillery and musketry playing on front and flanks, made the bravest brigade in the French service recoil, repelled another desperate attack of cavalry, and retired slowly and orderly, facing about to fire, themselves under a cross-fire almost to the end."

With men of this stamp there was little chance that the sight of dense columns would move them. How little fear they had of death was to be shown again at Albuera, and in the Great Breach at Badajoz.

But Napoleon relied on other things to shake his enemy besides a moral impression. His swarms of *tirail-*

*leurs* were to harass his enemy, his artillery with storms of shell was to shake him, then the weight of the dense columns would complete the work.

Here came in Wellington's foresight and skill. He met the *tirailleurs* with skirmishers as thick, as nimble, and as resolute, who prevented the French preliminary attack getting so close that it could seriously trouble his lines, and he drew up his lines where they were in some shelter from the enemy's guns. His favourite position was just behind the brow of a hill.<sup>1</sup> The troops would then be out of sight, and to a great degree out of fire, till the French assaulting columns reached the top. Instantly they came in sight they were blown to pieces with a blast of fire; if that was not enough, there came a charge with the bayonet. Met thus, the French attacks never succeeded. After a time the French hardly dared to assault any position which the British might be holding. Owing to the way in which Wellington masked his men they never could tell whether he was in force or not; bitter experience had taught them what might be waiting for them on the other side of the hill.

Wellington's methods and the French failures in Spain will be seen more fully in the next two chapters. The first will show him on the defensive, driven back to within a few miles of Lisbon; the second will follow him on the offensive from the Portuguese frontier to the Pyrenees. Yet in both the same troubles beset and hamper the French, and the same qualities win the battles for the Allies.

<sup>1</sup> The Duke's observation on the Prussians, drawn up in full view of the French on the open slopes of Ligny, was: "They will get damnably mauled". They did.

## CHAPTER X

### Torres Vedras—Wellington on the Defensive

[A map of the Douro and Tagus valleys will be found at the end of Chapter XI.]

MASSÉNA's attempt to drive Wellington out of Portugal occupied the latter part of 1810. What had already happened in the Peninsular War may be briefly summed up as three great French thrusts, and their corresponding parries or counter-strokes.<sup>1</sup>

(1) In 1807, when Spain and France were friends, a French army under Junot moved through Spain, and occupied Lisbon practically without striking a blow. But it soon became clear that Napoleon would not be content with Portugal. He intended to seize Spain also. He inveigled the King, Charles IV, and his son, Ferdinand, to Bayonne, tricked and frightened them both into resigning, and gave the crown to his brother, Joseph Bonaparte. Thereon Spain exploded in a series of insurrections, and the French army of occupation was scattered trying to put them down. In July, 1808, Dupont was cut off by two Spanish forces, and surrendered with 20,000 men at Baylen. In August Wellington<sup>2</sup> landed

<sup>1</sup> See map facing p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> General Sir Arthur Wellesley: he became Viscount Wellington in 1809, and it is simpler to call him Wellington throughout.

on the coast of Portugal. Junot attacked him at Vimiero (August, 1808), was soundly beaten, and was glad to agree to evacuate Portugal. Soon after the French, threatened on all sides by Spanish armies, withdrew from Madrid, and the end of the first thrust and parry saw the French back on the line of the Ebro (September, 1808).

(2) Napoleon then took the job in hand. With 200,000 men at his back he burst over the Ebro and shattered the Spanish armies, whose commanders, puffed up by Baylen, were full of insane schemes of fighting pitched battles, or, still worse, of surrounding 200,000 French veterans with some 80,000 raw levies—the ambitious exploit of containing the greater within the less. He entered Madrid, and was preparing to overrun the south of Spain, when there came the second parry, in the shape of Moore's daring march into Leon, against his communications. Napoleon at once gave up his southern plans and rushed at Moore. Moore got news in time and drew back promptly. Soult chased him to Corunna and was beaten there. Moore's army had to leave Spain, but his counter-stroke had diverted all the weight of the French to the desolate region of Galicia, and gave the Spaniards of the centre and south three months to rally (January, 1809):

(3) The third French stroke was Soult's invasion of Portugal from the north. He took Oporto and was meaning to advance on Lisbon. But Wellington, who had been sent back to Portugal, made a sudden pounce on him, crossed the Douro by a swift unexpected attack delivered while Soult was asleep and his staff at breakfast, and threw him back in rout to the north. Turning south again, Wellington moved up the Tagus in com-



pany with the Spaniards under Cuesta, and beat off Victor's army at Talavera (July, 1809). These two battles, combined with the activity of the Spaniards, who were everywhere beaten on the field, but always gathering again and cutting off French communications and capturing detachments, convinced Napoleon that a fourth effort was needful. In the same month in which Talavera was fought he had defeated the Austrians at Wagram, and he was again able to reinforce his armies in Spain from Germany. Perceiving that the British force was the backbone of the resistance, he decided to drive it from Portugal and capture Lisbon once more. It was with that aim, that he sent Masséna in 1810.

From August 20th, 1809, when the British force got clear of the French on its retreat from Talavera, till February 27th, 1810, not a shot was fired by Wellington's men. The French did not dare to follow him into Portugal for lack of men, and Wellington, who had had enough of evasive Spanish promises, faint-hearted Spanish troops, and cantankerous Spanish generals at Talavera, would not hear of another advance into Spain; Napoleon, who had found out in his march against Moore what a Spanish winter was like, was waiting for the spring; so the main fighting<sup>1</sup> died down, while each side prepared for the next move.

Napoleon's first intention was to come himself, but he changed his mind<sup>2</sup> and decided to send Masséna. He intended to put more than 100,000 fresh troops in Spain,

<sup>1</sup> In the autumn of 1809 the Spaniards were routed at Ocana and elsewhere, and in January and February, 1810, Soult overran Andalusia.

<sup>2</sup> He was occupied with the divorce of Josephine and his marriage with Marie Louise.

to give Masséna three army corps—the 2nd, 6th, and 8th—and to put him as well at the head of most of the troops already in Castile and Leon. This would make about 140,000 men under his command<sup>1</sup>—a big force. But he did not make Masséna Commander-in-Chief in Spain; consequently not only Suchet and Augereau in Aragon and Catalonia were independent of him—they did not so much matter; in any case they were 400 miles away, too far to help—but Joseph with the army of the centre, and Soult with the army of the south were out of his control. Masséna could not order them to work with him; he could only ask them, or refer to the Emperor, and, as we shall see, Masséna got no support when the pinch came.

Masséna himself was fifty-two—very nearly the oldest of Napoleon's marshals—as a man the most unbearable, and as a soldier the most capable. Few liked him: he was hard, suspicious, revengeful, and amazingly greedy for money; he had risen from the ranks, and displayed all the defects of low birth now that he had attained high place. His enemies—who were many—declared that he was a Jew, and that his name was but Manasseh converted. But he stood in front of all the other marshals both in abilities and in record. He had made a name before Napoleon appeared; he had distinguished himself in Italy in 1796; his fierce attack on Zurich in 1799, which had driven Suwaroff to that memorable retreat over the high passes to Chur, and his heroic defence of Genoa in 1800 were the two outstanding exploits in his career. Napoleon knew that he was better fitted than any other

<sup>1</sup> Many of these were in garrisons.

of his men to command a big force. He had given him the army of Italy with which to detain the Archduke Charles in 1805. Perhaps the best witness of all is Wellington, who picked him out as the most dangerous of all his opponents, and said that against him he had always to be vigilant and could take none of the risks which he could safely accept against the others.

Doubtless he was the best man Napoleon could send, and perhaps Napoleon under-estimated some of the trouble which Masséna's personal character might cause, for to the Emperor he naturally made himself as pleasant as he could.<sup>1</sup> He was, however, not on good terms with Soult, at daggers drawn with Ney, and Junot also detested him. As the first might have to support him, and the last two were to serve under him, there was little chance of cordiality in French counsels. But since Masséna was a man who could make his subordinates obey, and did not expect affection anyhow, this did not seriously matter.

As Masséna's task was to clear the English out of Portugal, the next things to look at are, first, the geography of the country, and, secondly, the means at Wellington's hand to defend it.<sup>2</sup>

Portugal is pierced by two great rivers, the Douro in the north, on which lies Oporto, the Tagus in the south, on which lies Lisbon. It was easier to strike at Oporto, but that would be only a diversion; Wellington was based on Lisbon, and therefore it must be on Lisbon that Masséna must march.

<sup>1</sup> Which was good of him, as Napoleon had managed to shoot him in the eye, in his endeavour to bring down a pheasant. Napoleon, however, with ready subterfuge, declared that Berthier had fired the unlucky shot, and Berthier was too polite—or too wise—to contradict.

<sup>2</sup> A map showing the main features will be found on p. 181.

This suggests a belief that, as Madrid is in the upper Tagus valley, Masséna will make Madrid his starting-point, and come down the Tagus by the main road, which runs from one capital to the other along the river. This seems natural. But what seems natural in Spain never exists. *There is no main road down the Tagus valley*; there is no road at all along the river, for the country is so beset with cliffs and ravines that passage is impossible. There are wretched hill tracks which run through upland wildernesses, but they are so bad that Junot—who went part of the way down the Tagus to Lisbon<sup>1</sup>—having started with 20,000 men from Salamanca, and moving by Alcantara, and from Abrantes to Lisbon—lost on the way every gun and every horse, and reached Lisbon with 1500 limping, exhausted, ragged infantry; and they had not seen an enemy nor fired a shot. So much for the direct route—the natural one, as we were tempted to think it.

With less confidence one now hazards a guess that Masséna will follow the Douro valley to Oporto, and from there on by the coast road; but there was no Douro road for the same reason that there was no Tagus road. No road-engineer would face the difficulties.

Then, where were the roads?<sup>1</sup> Plainly there must be some.

The best road towards Lisbon from Madrid—which is the great road centre of Spain—was through Talavera to Almaraz on the Tagus; it crosses the Sierra de Guadalupe and comes down to Merida on the Guadiana, follows that river to Badajoz, near the Portuguese frontier, and

<sup>1</sup> By Napoleon's order.



thence through Elvas to Lisbon. This road is roundabout, and it is blocked by the fortresses of Badajoz and Elvas. The length did not matter, for Masséna, as we shall see, was in no hurry. But it has one insuperable objection. *This road does not lead into Lisbon.* It only leads to the Tagus ferry opposite Lisbon. The estuary at its narrowest is 2000 yards wide. Further up it expands into a lagoon twenty miles long and from four to eleven miles wide, and beyond that again for miles the Tagus was unbridged. How was Masséna to cross, especially in face of a British fleet with Wellington's army ready to oppose his crossing?

Masséna, then, was bound to come by a road that would enter Portugal to the north of the Tagus, for no other would let him reach Lisbon. On that—and some other things—hung the whole possibility of Portugal being held. He must come from Old Castile and the valley of the upper Douro to Salamanca, past Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, and thence to Lisbon. The country then that lies between the Douro and the Tagus demands a closer study.

Between the upper Douro and the upper Tagus runs the mountain wall of the Sierra de Guadarrama. This is continued westward by the Sierra de Gredos, and on reaching the Portuguese frontier widens out into a great mass of mountain with its highest and steepest part nearest to the Tagus. First comes the Sierra de Gata and then the Serra da Estrella. This goes on south-westwards towards the sea, drops away to easier country south of Coimbra, and rises again in a tangled mass of hills which forms that projecting snout of Portugal on



which Lisbon stands. The point to remark is that, *between the Tagus and the Douro on the Portuguese frontier lies a great square of hilly country about 100 miles in depth.*<sup>1</sup> All this upland is extremely rugged and broken; the roads crawl



along the scarped hill-sides, plunging into one ravine and climbing painfully out, only to dive into another. Moreover, the country was not only hilly, but desolate. In the whole square there is hardly a town of any consequence,

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 183.

while villages are few and small. Supplies would be intensely difficult to get; in places not even water was to be had for stretches of six to eight miles. Everything the army needed would have to be brought with it. Yet through this the invader was bound to come in order to get at Lisbon.

So much geography tells us; but history says much the same thing. Spain *and* Portugal. Why Portugal? How did this kingdom avoid absorption into Spain when Castile, Aragon, Leon, Navarre, and the rest of them joined? And, even so, how did little Portugal escape being conquered by its huge, ambitious, and powerful neighbour? For two centuries Europe was convulsed by the aggression of Spain and the house of Hapsburg. It fastened on the Low Countries and on Lorraine; it laid hands on much of Italy; it invaded France. Yet little Portugal, lying at its very door, survived—save for a short period of Spanish rule.<sup>1</sup> If there had been two great easy highways down Douro and down Tagus to bring hordes of Spanish troops into Portugal it could not have survived. Its very existence shows how well guarded is its frontier *in the vital spot*.

Here comes one of the best proofs of Wellington's amazing insight—and foresight. Moore had declared that Portugal was not defensible: Wellington was perfectly certain that it was. In 1809 he told Castlereagh that if he were given 20,000 British troops,<sup>2</sup> the French could not beat him out of it. He reckoned that he could

<sup>1</sup> From about 1580 till about 1660 Portugal was either in the hands of Spain or under its influence.

<sup>2</sup> He raised the figure to 30,000 on reconsideration, and this meant *bayonets*. Guns, cavalry and so forth must be added; the total would thus be brought to 40,000.

recreate the Portuguese army and make it trustworthy; that the militia and local levies would so harass the invader that they would get neither supplies nor information about each other; that the French could only get together an army big enough to threaten him seriously



by leaving hold on parts of Spain, and that, directly they did so, rebellion would break out in Spain; that a big army moving through the mountains into Portugal would either so lose by detachments as to cease to be dangerous or if it hung together it would starve. All this forecast came exactly true. To beat Wellington back from

Talavera in 1809 Ney had to come down from Galicia, and so that province was lost to the French; to check him at Burgos in 1812 all the south had to be given up. The French could not neglect him, since he lay on their flank and could strike at any of their isolated forces; and, as will be seen, they could not drive him out of Portugal either, even when Masséna was given 100,000 men to act against him.

So he did by 1813 what he predicted in 1809. He made his little British army the deciding factor in Spain, and in doing so he did much to bring about Napoleon's downfall.

In the beginning of 1810 the French gradually gathered where Wellington expected them, namely, on the road from Salamanca to Ciudad Rodrigo. Since January Wellington's head-quarters had been at Vizeu, about half-way between Coimbra and the frontier fortress of Almeida. But he also kept a detached force under Hill south of the Tagus watching lest the French should either make a desperate push down that river either by the south bank or by the north, and so stab him in the back while he was engaged with Masséna in front. But the French in that neighbourhood, under Reynier, lay quiet. In March Ney reached the neighbourhood of Ciudad Rodrigo, where it was the business of the Light Division under Craufurd to watch him. How well that watch was kept may be judged by knowing that from March to July Craufurd faced an active enemy six times his force, was never surprised, never had his line broken, never lost a detachment, and never sent a

false piece of news. In its way this is one of the most brilliant things in the war, but the details are out of place here.

On May 28th Masséna reached Salamanca and took over the command. An excuse for the slowness which had distinguished the French so far, and which was to continue, may be found in Napoleon's instructions to him. They were these: "You can spend the summer months in taking Ciudad Rodrigo and then Almeida. You need not hurry, but can go methodically to work." Unlike Napoleon this;<sup>1</sup> but two previous dashes had failed, and probably he meant that the work was to be done thoroughly this time.

Ciudad Rodrigo was invested on June 15th, and taken on July 9th. The French moved on to Almeida after a considerable delay owing to the shortage of ammunition, and began the siege of that town on August 15th. Here they had a stroke of luck. On the evening of August 26th some powder-barrels were being taken out of the central magazine. One was leaking and laid a train back to the rest. A French shell chanced to fall in the courtyard and lit this powder, the spark ran back to another barrel standing at the magazine door, which had been left open, the barrel exploded, and a moment after the magazine blew up like the bursting of a volcano, and with it went the whole centre of the town. Only five houses escaped being unroofed; what had been the castle was now a vast chasm in the rock, and what had been the streets were stony ravines so choked with ruins that there

<sup>1</sup> Wellington's comment on this delay was: "This is not the way the French have conquered Europe".



was no chance to move, save along the ramparts. So perished Almeida.<sup>1</sup>

With the border fortresses now in his hands Masséna could move on. But again there was delay while rations were collected. There were still many things for Masséna to discover about Portugal, but he did know that the country ahead of him would yield little food, and therefore supplies for fifteen days must be gathered. Having gathered them, he set out on September 15th, but before doing so he called up his detached left wing, Reynier, from the Tagus valley. Wellington, his mind now relieved from any idea of a stroke at his flank, called up Hill, and the two armies were now concentrating face to face. It is time to see what their numbers and their qualities were.

Masséna had about 63,000 men—Napoleon had meant him to have 100,000, but Masséna's total had never risen above 80,000.<sup>2</sup> Detachments on his lines in Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida and elsewhere, sick, and losses had already diminished him by 17,000. Still his 63,000 were mostly first-rate troops.<sup>3</sup> And though Ney and Masséna

<sup>1</sup> The city has never recovered; there are great gaps bare of houses inside the wall still, and traces of the explosion are visible in almost every building that survived.

<sup>2</sup> Kellermann had 12,000 men in Leon, and Bonnet 9000 in Asturias; the Government of Burgos, Navarre, and Santander was maintained by 31,000 men, including two divisions of the Young Guard; Drouet's 9th Corps, coming to reinforce Masséna with 18,000 men, was about Vitoria in September. Thus between Bayonne and the frontier of Galicia and northern Portugal were over 70,000 men. But they were all detained in garrisons or busy hunting the guerrilleros. Mina (the elder) kept 18,000 men in six different columns occupied in chasing him and his 3000 all that autumn—but they never caught him. Another guerrilla method was to ship these irregulars in British ships and coast along North Spain, making attacks on towns held by scanty French garrisons. These things explain why Masséna's force was not bigger, and why he was not heavily reinforced in front of Torres Vedras.

<sup>3</sup> Junot's (8th Corps) was largely made up of fourth battalions, and was therefore less good than Ney's (6th) or Reynier's (2nd Corps).

knew nothing of the English, Reynier and Junot did; yet the sequel will show that they had learnt little so far.

To set against this Wellington had 53,000, almost equally divided between British and Portuguese. One of his main cares since his return to Portugal had been to reorganize the Portuguese army. It had been put under the command of an Irishman, Beresford, and largely officered with British officers. It had been armed with British muskets and trained in British drill. Though it was rapidly improving in quality it was not yet steady, and Wellington did not fully trust it.

The French were superior in number and much superior in quality to the Portuguese half of the Allied Army. So far the balance is in their favour. On what else could Wellington rely?

First, on the difficulty of the country, which, if he fought, would give him strong defensive positions. That, however, was not decisive.

Second, on the Portuguese irregulars. These consisted partly of militia and partly of a levy *en masse* called the Ordenanza. Neither were of serious value in battle, and Wellington never used them so. But they were invaluable for guerrilla warfare. They would harass the French on the march, snipe them from hill-sides, destroy every small detachment and foraging-party, and cut all communications. They knew the paths through the hills; when beaten they made off, and the ground was so rough that the French could not follow. They could not stop Masséna, but they completely prevented him from getting any news. From the moment he left Almeida he never

heard another word from France, or from any other French force in Spain, for the next three months.

But Wellington had two other weapons yet in his armoury. Calling out the Ordenanza meant: *proclaiming a national war*. It carried with it the command of the State that all in the path of the invader should leave their homes, take away or destroy all food, and leave the land the wilderness that nature had made it. The Portuguese Government had agreed that this should be done, and Wellington enforced it. Thus he would fight the French with the weapon of famine.

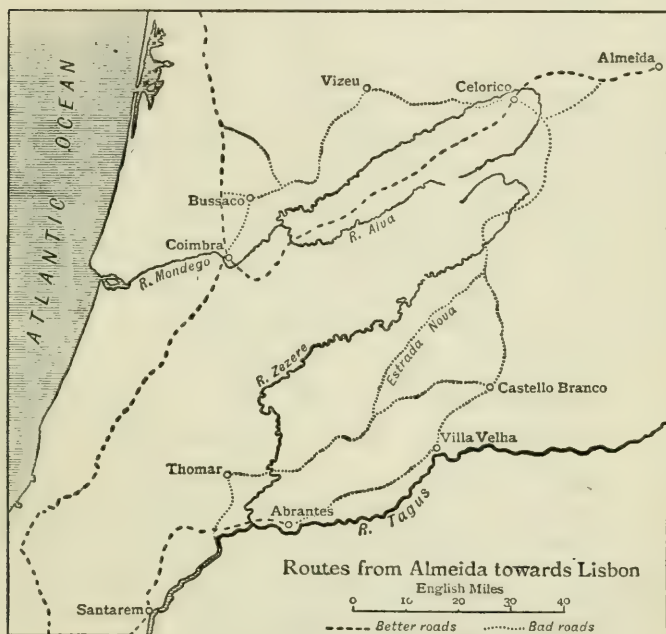
And of his last resource more in its proper place.

From Almeida four possible roads offered. Of these the farthest to the south would not do: it was very difficult, ran through quite barren country, and it led to Villa Velha and Abrantes, on the Tagus, a route which Masséna had already rejected by calling Reynier up from the Tagus valley. The next—the Estrada Nova—was at the time impossible, since Wellington had had great bits of it blasted away in precipitous places. The choice really lay between the northerly pair, one going by the south bank, the other to the north of the River Mondego. The one to the south was far the better, but Wellington had fortified a strong position on it where it crossed the Alva, and Masséna knew this. So he decided for the most northerly route of all, from Celorico through Vizeu on Coimbra. Wellington remarked he had chosen the worst road in Portugal: that was an exaggeration; but it was an uncommonly bad one, and at the end lay the ridge of Busaco.

Here Wellington decided to give battle. While he

gathered there, Masséna stumbled forward on the horrible tracks across the hills from Celorico. Here is Colonel Noel's experience with the guns of Junot's division.

"All the country-side is mountain and rock. There



is no road, only a stony dangerous track, all steep ups and downs. I had to march with a party of gunners ahead of me with picks and crowbars to enlarge the track. As each only looked out for itself, the guns soon got left to the rear, deserted by infantry and cavalry. We only arrived at our halting-places late at night utterly done up. The guns were almost always abandoned to take

care of themselves," and in consequence of this the whole park of the army was nearly lost through a flank attack of Trant's Portuguese militia, for, if these had had a little more enterprise in driving home their attack, they might have tumbled all the reserve artillery and ammunition over the precipice and captured most of Masséna's supplies. As it was, Masséna wrote to Berthier:

"All our marches are across a desert; not a soul is to be seen anywhere; everything is abandoned. The English push their barbarity to the point of shooting the wretched inhabitant who tries to remain in his village. The women, the children, the aged have all decamped. We cannot find a guide anywhere. The soldiers discover a few potatoes and other vegetables. They burn for the moment when they shall meet the enemy."

Thus by the time the French reached Busaco on September 25th more than half the provisions they had taken were gone, and the road was blocked by Wellington's men, ready to fight.

The Battle of Busaco is an apt example of Wellington's defensive tactics. The granite ridge on which the British and Portuguese took their position stretches nine miles northwards from the Mondego. At the Mondego end it is precipitous, and the rest of the way it is very steep, but the hill-side is bare—a long slope of heather and granite rock. The main road that the French were following pierces the centre of the position almost at the steepest and highest places; other tracks—very bad ones—climb it elsewhere. Of course it was far too big for Wellington's army. It was not all occupied; there were wide gaps in the line; but this was not so dangerous as it



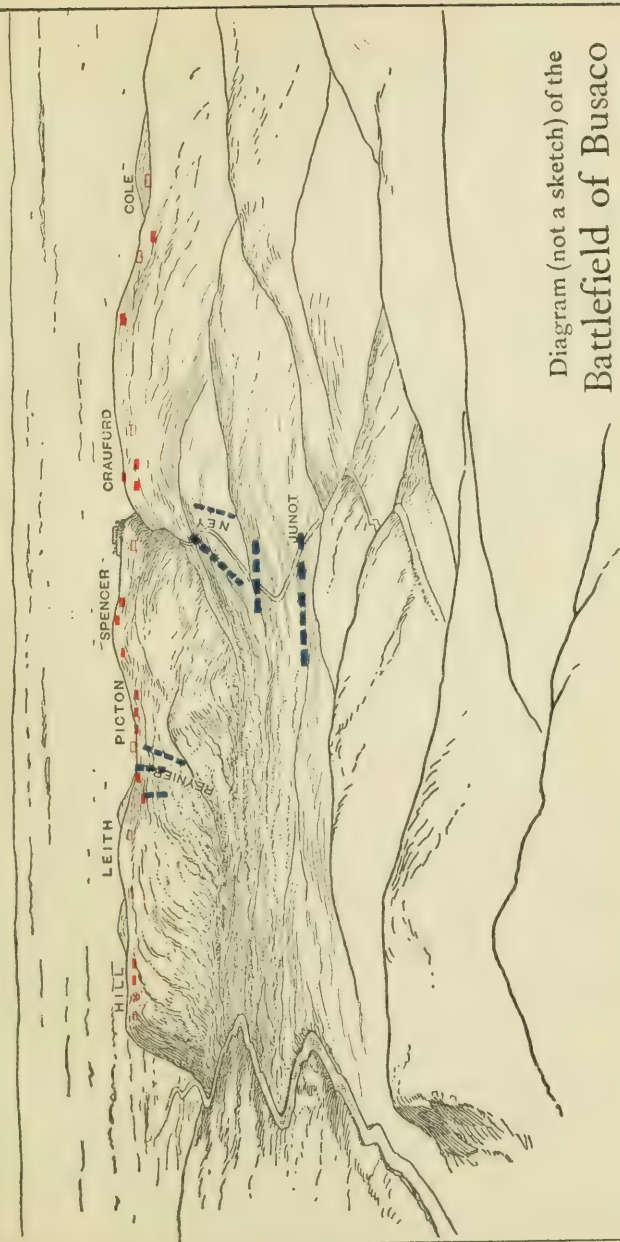


Diagram (not a sketch) of the  
Battlefield of Busaco

— French    - - British    — Portuguese  
*[N.B. The French could not see from below how their enemy was stationed]*



seems, for several reasons. The ridge is high and steep,<sup>1</sup> and has for much of its extent a flattish top, which is out of sight from below. Thus the French could not tell what was strongly held and what was not. Again, at the back of the ridge lay a road, which Wellington had improved so that troops could be moved quickly and invisibly from one place to another. Finally, the French could be clearly seen, and their attacks, coming slowly up the hill, gave the Allies ample time. Thus, though Wellington had a smaller army, and half of it was in his eyes not fully to be trusted, he stood to fight.

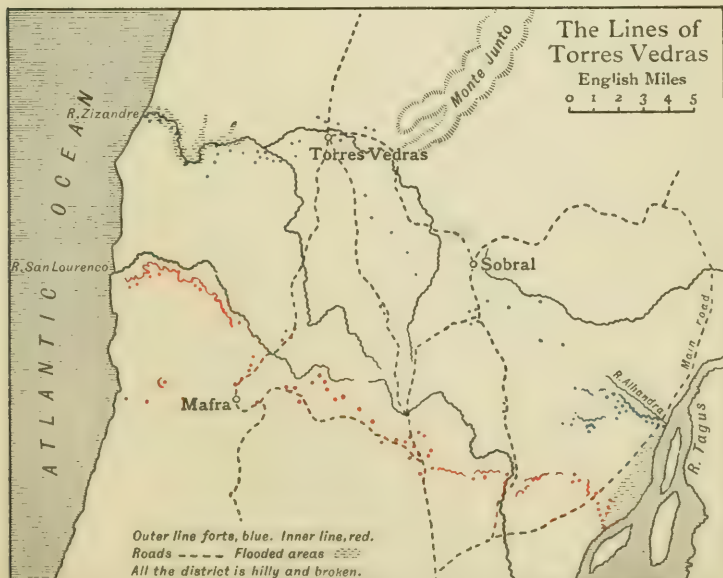
Briefly, the action was this. As soon as it was light on a misty morning (September 27th) Reynier on the French left attacked in two great columns—his left-hand division numbering 8000, his right hand 6500. Though part of this attack had the luck to pick a place where there was a gap in Wellington's line, and though twice French troops actually reached the top, the whole attack failed before the fire of the British and Portuguese *in line* and the fierce charges made with the bayonet. Merle's eleven battalions were driven off by four of the Allies; Foy's seven battalions by half their number. Once on the run the French could not stop. "All was confusion and uproar, smoke, fire, and bullets. French officers and soldiers, drums and drummers, knocked down in every direction; British, French, and Portuguese all mixed up together; while in the midst of all was to be seen Wallace

<sup>1</sup> Napier and other narrators speak of a chasm so profound that the naked eye could hardly distinguish the movement of the troops in the bottom. The ridge is 1200 feet above sea-level at its highest, but not nearly so high as this above the surrounding country. It was fairly easy to see what was happening below, but not easy to see what went on on the top.

leaked out. Montbrun stumbled on the lines with the same shock as that with which one meets an unexpected coal-scuttle in the dark.

The shorter, inner, and stronger line was 22 miles long. But let us attend to the outer and weaker one. This ran 29 miles from the mouth of the Zizandre, on the Atlantic, to where the Alhandra joins the Tagus. Briefly, the defences were these. The rivers at either end had been dammed and their valleys converted into huge marshes. The hill-sides were plastered with redoubts so placed to give cross-fire everywhere, some of them small, with only three to six guns, others great fortified camps. All had ditches 16 feet wide and 12 feet deep, and they were palisaded and guarded against a rush by abattis, *chevaux de frise*, and other obstacles. In all there were between fifty and sixty redoubts with some 230 guns. Where the slopes were easy, everything—buildings, woods, trees—had been cleared away and the ground made even to secure a field of fire. Where they were steep they had been cut and blasted to make actual sheer rock-walls, which could not be climbed; this was done for 2000 yards of hill-side about Alhandra. Finally, every valley and ravine that led up into the hills and might open a gap to the French was stopped with loose stone dykes—fifteen feet high—or with felled trees with their boughs pointing outwards. This, it will be observed, was the weaker line.

Fortifications are not everything: what of the men? Twenty-nine miles is a long line. May not Wellington, by dispersing his men over such a distance, be too weak to resist a concentrated attack? Let us reckon heads.







Wellington had been reinforced from England, and had now some 35,000 British troops with the colours—close on 10,000 more than he had at Busaco. He had also under his command 24,500 Portuguese regulars. Thus he outnumbered Masséna, whose force had dwindled to well under 60,000 men. *Yet Wellington was not going to use a single one of his regular battalions to garrison the works.* To do that he had over 8000 Portuguese militia, 12,000 Ordenanza—all well armed with British muskets and largely under British officers—and 8000 Spaniards of La Romana's army. Thus he could man the lines at the average rate of something like 1000 men per mile *and keep all his field-army posted just behind, ready to meet any French attack and reinforce weak spots.* Semaphores could signal any movement from one end of the lines to the other in seven minutes. The engineers had built inner roads along which the troops could move, while, as the map shows, the outer side of the lines was cut in two by the great mass of the Serra de Monte Junto. There are no roads across it, scarcely even paths. Thus a French force acting say against Torres Vedras would be cut off from its comrades on the east by an impassable mountain wall. Behind these lines of Torres Vedras then—far stronger than the ridge at Busaco, and held by something like 90,000 men—Wellington might well say, with ironical moderation, "he thought his arrangements had made his position tolerably secure". Montbrun found the lines on October 11th. The main body of the French advanced to Sobral on the 14th, and Masséna rode forward to scout. One battery fired a shot at him to bid him come no farther. He lifted his hat to it and moved out of

range—and knew in his heart that Wellington had beaten him. For a month the French army stayed facing the lines. The longer they looked the less they liked them. Masséna never dared to risk an attack.<sup>1</sup>

The campaign then developed into a test of endurance—a starving-match; with, be it said, all the starving on one side. While Wellington, secure in his lines, could be supplied by sea, Masséna had to draw his food from the country, and from a country which had already been devastated by Wellington, and stripped still barer by the French in their advance. In theory, of course, Masséna had all northern Portugal to live upon. Practically, all that he could reach was what lay just to his rear, for the Portuguese irregulars behind him hemmed him in, cut off all his foraging-parties, and prevented either news, supplies, or reinforcements reaching him. They had even swooped down on Coimbra directly Masséna left it, taking prisoner the little garrison and close on 4000 sick, wounded, and others. The business of foraging soon took up a great part of Masséna's force. "The majority of the men",

<sup>1</sup> An illustration of how great were Masséna's difficulties in sending or receiving news is worth giving. When he had been in front of the lines for a fortnight he saw he must have reinforcements or he would fail. He therefore decided to send a message to Napoleon. To make sure that it would arrive, he gave the messenger—General Foy—a whole battalion of infantry and 120 mounted men as escort. Not only this, but he further sent out a brigade in another direction to demonstrate against the irregulars and let Foy get a clear start. Foy started on October 31st, slipped over the mountains to Castello Branco, reached Ciudad Rodrigo on November 8th, and went on with a dragoon escort to Valladolid. He reached Paris on November 21st, and saw the Emperor the next day. No despatches were issued till December 4th, however, and Foy set off again with his to Masséna on December 22nd. With 1800 men he broke through to Masséna, and reached him at Santarem on February 5th.

Thus, consequent on Foy's news, *which left Portugal on October 31st*, Napoleon issued orders *what was to be done in February*—more than three months later—orders which were bound to be out of date.

said Clausel, "are absent on raids to the rear to seek maize and cattle. The last detachment has been nine days away. For a week the troops have been living on polenta [boiled maize flour], and of this they get only half a ration. During the last few days the 1st Division has received only one ration of meat—namely, six ounces of goat's flesh." It was impossible to stay longer outside the lines. On November 14th Masséna resolved to retreat to Santarem on the Tagus. Here he would have fresh country behind him, he might be able to bridge the river, and he might at any rate stay till he got reinforcements, or till Soult might make a diversion by striking at Lisbon from Badajoz.

These hopes all failed him. He hung on at Santarem far longer than was expected. Wellington allowed him a month. Masséna stayed for three. The only reinforcement that reached him was 6000 men under Drouet in December—far too few to make any difference. Soult, indeed, began to advance, and took Badajoz on March 10th; but Masséna had heard nothing of his forward movement, and a week before had decided to leave Santarem, since he could no longer feed his army there.

On the sufferings of the French during the winter in and about Santarem, of their frantic searches for food, their brutality to the peasants and the merciless ferocity with which the peasants retaliated, it is needless to speak at length. Most of the corn in the district had been buried or hidden in ravines and caves; the French could not find it, but they stalked the peasants who ventured back to their homes at night, and offered them the choice between being shot and revealing those hidden stores. If

the peasant was obstinate, or could tell nothing, he was murdered. Sometimes even torture was used: he would be strung up in a halter and let down, half dead, to see if he would confess or remember.<sup>1</sup> These are horrible stories, but all the faults did not lie with the French; the Portuguese peasants murdered all the Frenchmen they could catch—often, indeed, torturing them to death. When Masséna retreated, the British came on two wounded French soldiers beset by half a dozen Portuguese, who were killing them by inches. “On our approach”, says Grattan, “they fled; both the Frenchmen were still alive and asked us to shoot them. We dared not, and when we had passed on, we could perceive the peasants descending from the hill, like vultures who have been scared from their prey, but return with redoubled voracity.” Little wonder that neither French nor peasants showed mercy.

In September, 1810, Masséna’s army had entered Portugal 63,000 strong. On March 15th, 1811, it was again falling back towards the frontier—but only 40,000 had come back. Busaco cost it less than 5000. It never fought another battle, small encounters were few; yet sickness, straggling, starvation, and the murder-war with the Ordenanza had robbed it of close on 20,000 men.

Masséna’s campaign illustrates how completely the French lost in Spain what had been their winning advantages in Germany. Owing to the poverty of the country, and the national war which both Spaniards and Portuguese

<sup>1</sup> These things were not done, of course, by large parties under officers, but by stray foragers. A number of men broke loose from French command altogether and lived by plunder. The French had to send detachments to destroy them, as they refused to return to their regiments.



fought, Masséna could not keep together a big enough army, he could not get any substantial reinforcement, he could not receive support from the other French armies, and, finally, he could not even feed his men. Wellington had realized what the French difficulties would be and used them all. He stripped the country, organized the best of the Portuguese for his own army, used the rest to harass the French, and, finally, leading them deep into Portugal, brought them to a stand where he himself could not be turned, nor have his communications cut—at a place where he was strongest because he was closest to his base, and they were weakest because they were farthest from theirs. There is nothing daring or striking about Wellington's plans: they were safe, sure, methodical, inexorable. Nothing was left to chance; he ran no risks; nothing could move him from his design. He refused to risk a man to save Ciudad Rodrigo or Almeida—although he knew the Spaniards would think him lazy or timid—because he was not going to fight for renown but for victory. He did not even take the chances which he had of destroying part of Masséna's army by a sally from the lines, or by attacking him on his retreat to Santarem. Starvation was surer than any battle. Besides, the news of a battle won might bring down Soult on him through Badajoz, might make the French unite. What he had reckoned on happening did happen. He won his campaign practically without fighting, by "making the best use of the means at hand to attain the end in view".

## CHAPTER XI

### Vitoria—Wellington on the Offensive

[A map of the Douro and Tagus valleys will be found at the end of the chapter.]

THE campaign of Torres Vedras reveals Wellington on the defensive. He was outnumbered, half his men were of doubtful quality, and he was undertaking to do what Moore—and, be it said, Napoleon—had declared to be impossible, namely, maintain himself in Portugal. In spite of these difficulties he achieved the impossible; and, what is more, he did it easily. At no moment in the campaign had Masséna a real chance;<sup>1</sup> there was no danger of his winning Busaco, or winning it so decisively as to imperil Wellington's retreat to the lines of Torres Vedras. They lay behind him always open and always secure. Masséna could not catch Wellington unprepared, could not storm the lines, and could not stave off Wel-

<sup>1</sup> Wellington ran no risks *himself*. Craufurd embarked on a combat on the Coa, in August, 1810, which he—rather fortunately—turned into a success: Wellington's sour comment was that he "might have lost the Light Division". Again, after Hill had joined Wellington, La Romana's Spaniards were all that was left to protect Wellington's flank on the lower Tagus. Wellington knew that as long as La Romana remained quiet, Soult would never collect men to go and molest him—he was too well occupied in Andalusia. But La Romana was twice tempted into making strokes at Seville, to Wellington's great disgust, and by doing so drew the French north against him and got beaten both times. Fortunately, the French were content, and did not press on by the Lisbon road. If Napoleon had been there, they would have acted with more vigour. Once or twice, after Masséna's retreat from the lines, Wellington made slips: he let Marmont catch him with his force scattered in September, 1811, but Marmont did not seize his opportunity.

lington's ally, that grim captain, *Famine*, who stepped in to decide the issue.

Vitoria is far more brilliant. Advance is more stirring than retreat, quick movement more attractive than slow, a crowning victory in the field more dazzling than methodical starvation. Yet the campaign has the same qualities, though Wellington is this time the aggressor. For the first time he has the bigger force, but as before he runs few risks; this time again the French are hardly given a chance. They are hunted right across the north of Spain from one line to another by a plan that, like the British column at Fontenoy, never falters and never hurries out of its majestic stride, till they meet the inevitable defeat close to their French frontier. In brief, the campaigns of Torres Vedras and of Vitoria can be described by the same adjective. They are both inexorable.

Vitoria was fought in 1813. Between it and Torres Vedras lay two years. We must see first what these years contained.

The main fact to remember is that Wellington's chief aim was to defend Portugal. Till that was secure he would embark on no expeditions into Spain. It is plain from a glance at the map that though he was on the French flank so long as they moved southwards into Andalusia, they would be equally on his flank if he marched north-eastwards into the Douro valley. Till he commanded the roads, the main gateways between Spain and Portugal—making it impossible for the French to stab him in the back, so to speak, by the road which he was not using—he could not go forward. These chief roads are, we have seen, two. The northern Burgos,

Salamanca, Ciudad Rodrigo road, and the southern Madrid, Talavera, Almaraz, Badajoz road; each of these was commanded by a great Spanish fortress, and unluckily for Wellington both Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz had fallen into French hands. Till these were retaken no advance could be made.<sup>1</sup>

The operations of 1811 then hinged on these fortresses. Ciudad Rodrigo was taken in January, 1812, Badajoz in April, 1812, both by quick pounces before the French could concentrate to drive off the besiegers, and the way at last lay open. In the summer of 1812 Wellington moved into the Douro valley and beat Marmont at Salamanca. But the news of this defeat made the French concentrate, and in the autumn they drove him back from Burgos into Portugal almost as swiftly as they had hunted Moore to Corunna. Yet much had been done in 1812. The border fortresses remained in Wellington's hands, and to concentrate men to drive him back from Burgos, the French had had to give up all the South. Andalusia was cleared.

But another momentous series of events had taken place in 1812. Napoleon had led his *Grande Armée* into Russia, and it had perished in the horrors of the retreat from Moscow. In March, 1813, Prussia had joined in against him, and Austria was known to be wavering. Thus he had to make another army for a vast campaign in Germany. He demanded over a million conscripts from France for the 1813 levies, but it was plain that these could not be made into soldiers in three months' time. Thus he was sure to denude Spain, and this when

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 181.



at last the gateways into Spain were safe in Wellington's hands.

Thus, even supposing that Wellington was not actually stronger, he was relatively stronger, for the French were weaker, both in position and number. But he was actually much stronger; he had been reinforced. Not only were his troops veterans; but the Portuguese fighting beside him had enormously improved in quality. So, too, had the Spanish regulars, and at last Wellington, having been made Commander-in-Chief of the Spanish armies, had some prospect of being able to make them work with him. They would no longer do as Cuesta had done in 1809, namely, oppose all proposals—even his own suggestions—directly Wellington showed any sign of adopting them.<sup>1</sup>

By April, 1813, the French force of effectives in Spain was not much above 165,000. Of these some 55,000 were chiefly in Catalonia and Valencia. Their commander was Suchet, the ablest French officer in Spain at the time. It was unlikely, however, that Suchet would interfere, for these eastern provinces of Catalonia and Valencia lie shut off from the rest of Spain by mountains, and the French armies there mainly worked from a base distinct from the rest. Their road to France lay round the eastern end of the Pyrenees. These two facts made it improbable that Suchet would come to the help of the rest against Wellington in the Douro valley; yet by moving through Aragon up the Ebro he might appear for a battle near the

<sup>1</sup> Castanos, with the main Spanish army, supported him loyally, but without much skill. Other commanders were less to be trusted, and the partisan leaders, though useful in harassing the French, could not be reckoned on in combined operations.



headwaters of that river. This Wellington made it his first business to prevent. He knew that Suchet could not detach men from Catalonia and Valencia if there was any danger of these provinces rebelling. Accordingly he ordered two Spanish armies to operate in Valencia, and he moved a British force of 8000 men by sea from Alicante to the neighbourhood of Tarragona, in order to threaten that Catalan town. With Suchet thus kept busy in both Catalonia and Valencia it was impossible for him to appear on the upper Ebro, except by abandoning his provinces entirely, and this Wellington was sure he would not do.

The remaining 110,000 French, the relics of the armies of the "south", the "centre", and "of Portugal" were on the western line of invasion. That is to say, they were placed either on the Tagus or Douro valleys with the same object, and in the main the same lines of communication. They were endeavouring to guard against an attack from Portugal, and if they fell back they must perforce retire by Burgos and by the western end of the Pyrenees.

The total of the Allies was about 200,000. Of these some 45,000 were to operate in the eastern provinces, and Castanos's army, about 40,000, lay scattered through the mountains which edge the Tierra del Campos to the north and west. Some of them were good, some still untrained and ill-disciplined. The core of the whole, however, was Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese army, a little over 70,000 strong.

While Wellington lay ready to concentrate for an advance, and able to increase his force by picking up portions of Castanos's army as he moved north-eastwards,

the French were scattered over 180 miles of country. Their left stretched from Toledo through Madrid to beyond Salamanca. Their right ran from there to behind the Esla. The utmost they could concentrate to defend the line of the upper Douro was 35,000 men.

It is at once evident how heavy were the odds in Wellington's favour. The superiority in numbers which the French had first had in reality, and then for some years in name (though the conditions in the Peninsula had made their superiority unreal), was gone now for good and all. And their advantage in quality was gone too. If they were still better than Spaniards or Portuguese, they were not so good as the British; and *they had found it out*. Talavera, Albuera, and Salamanca had taught them to expect to be beaten. Similarly the British were confident that they would win. They did not love Wellington—he was quite unlovable—but they respected him. “That long-nosed beggar who beats the French” was what his men said. Beating the French had become a habit in him.

One thing more must be reckoned: the partisan warfare—the business of surprise, raid, and, it must be said, something uncommonly like assassination—always fierce in Spain, had now flared up into a general conflagration in every district still occupied by the French. The fifth chapter of Book XX in Napier's *History of the Peninsular War* enumerates the four French armies whose business it was to oppose Wellington and meanwhile struggle with these swarms of hornets whom he calls the partisans, and he adds: “Now if the reader will follow the operations of these armies in the order of their importance, and

will mark their bearing on the main action of the campaign, he will be led gradually to understand how it was that in 1813 the French, though apparently in their full strength, were suddenly, irremediably, and as it were by a whirl-



The Partisan Affrays, January-April, 1813

wind, swept from the Peninsula". The reader, dutifully "following these operations", will appreciate Napier's assertion that he "will be led *gradually*"—for the chapter is bewildering. But some impression can be gathered from it. On the accompanying map the dots represent

places where affrays took place between the partisans and the French north of Tagus *in the course of four months only*, January–April, 1813. This does not include Catalonia; and the dots placed in the sea represent other affrays at places not marked on Thiers's war-map of Spain. Remark how difficult it was for the French to give full attention to Wellington, or to concentrate; remark also how these affrays cluster along the Valladolid, Burgos, Bayonne road—the French main line of communication.

For here in the valley of the middle Douro and from there to the Upper Ebro lay the French vital spot. Moore had revealed it in his swift thrust at the Carrion in 1808, that thrust which Napoleon had suspended all his other plans in Spain to parry. Wellington had struck at it again in 1812, when he shattered Marmont's army at Salamanca, where "forty thousand men were beaten in forty minutes", and had marched on to Burgos, only to fail in the siege and to be driven back by a desperate French concentration. Now he meant to strike again—and harder. He was not aiming merely at the enemy's lines of communication, nor trying to manœuvre him out of Spain. His objective was the main French army, and he intended to fight it; only he meant to fight in a place where defeat would be fatal to it.

To appreciate his plan we must see the position which the French held.<sup>1</sup>

The Douro and its tributaries drain the provinces of Leon and Old Castile. Though high ground, these are mainly flat. They are called Tierra del Campos (land of the plains); they are the best corn-growing part of Spain.

<sup>1</sup> See map on folder at end of chapter.



Here, too, there is a reasonably good system of roads. Yet, though itself flat and with easy communications, the *Tierra del Campos* is shut in by mountains. To the north the Cantabrian Mountains, to the east the Sierra Urbion, to the south the Guadarrama, to the west the Galician range, and to the south of the Douro that hundred-mile block of hills which Masséna penetrated in 1810.

It follows that, for the French to check an invader coming from the south of the Douro, the main line to hold will be that of the Douro itself. If he crosses this, there will be other lines of tributary rivers coming in from the north, of which the Carrion and the Pisuerga are the chief.

But at the western edge of the plain there is another defensive line, though a long one. On the Portuguese frontier the Tormes joins the Douro from the south. About thirty miles further up the Douro the Esla joins from the north. If then the line Tormes-Douro-Lower Esla were held, Wellington could not enter the *Tierra del Campos* at all. And if he were kept out of that the French communications would be sure, and the French could not be forced to uncover Madrid by a stroke aimed at them. This was the line that Napoleon wished Joseph to hold, urging him to concentrate behind it.<sup>1</sup> But, as we have seen, the activity of the guerrilleros and of the different Spanish armies had prevented this concentration.

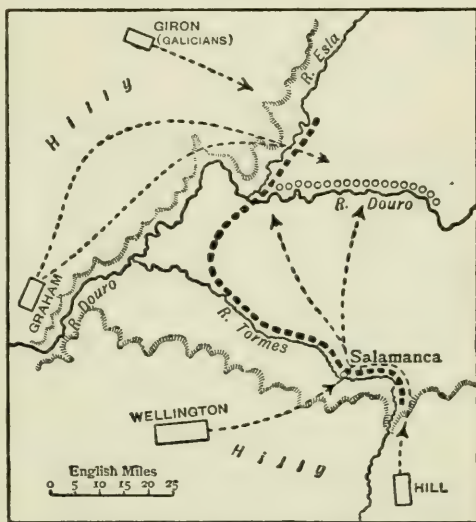
Contrariwise, Wellington wished to force his way into the *Tierra del Campos*. But if he broke across the Tormes the French could still hold the middle Douro against him, and behind that lay the Carrion and Pisuerga.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> These unite about 20 miles north of the Douro.



But what if part of his army could cross the Douro *in Portugal* unknown to the French? Then, while the rest kept the French occupied on the Tormes and middle Douro, this left wing could debouch unexpectedly on the Esla; the line of the Douro would be turned, the French outflanked, the whole Anglo-Portuguese army placed on a new front pointing straight at Burgos. There were objections to this plan. The left wing would have to go through the *Tras os Montes* — almost roadless and horribly rugged country. It involved exact timing to make a junction. If the French got wind of it they might fall on either wing separately.<sup>1</sup> Yet, with the country so hostile, it was unlikely the French would hear of it any more than they had heard of Torres Vedras; and, if they did attack either force, each had its retreat safe. Wellington could fall



— — — — — Line which Napoleon told Joseph to hold in force.  
 ooooo Line which Joseph held feebly—being outflanked by Graham.

Douro—Esla—Tormes

<sup>1</sup> This is the only serious risk which Wellington ran in the campaign, except that of being beaten at Vitoria. Battles are always risks. But it was not likely that the French could concentrate enough men to beat either wing of the Allies decisively before they joined, though they might have prevented their joining.

back on Ciudad Rodrigo, and the left wing, if threatened on the Esla, could retreat, as Moore had done, on Astorga and Galicia, and, as we had command of the sea, he would be safe whenever he came to it.

The first hint that Wellington intended to turn the French right on the Esla is contained in a letter from Wellington to General Graham. It is brief, thus:—

23rd April, 1813.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“I have just heard of your arrival at Lisbon on the 20th instant. You will have received my letters there.

“There has been no material change since I wrote last. I propose to move as soon as I can after the beginning of the month, *and rather think between ourselves* I shall direct my way across the lower Douro within the kingdom of Portugal.

“Ever, dear Sir, yours faithfully,

“WELLINGTON.”

This is characteristic of the Iron Duke. It is rare that a great plan is shadowed out so casually.

General Sir Thomas Graham, to 'whom' Wellington meant to give charge of this turning movement, was a most remarkable man. He was born in 1748 and grew up as a great sportsman, a Whig member of Parliament, and the husband of a beautiful wife. She fell into ill health, and Graham went with her to the south of France in 1792, where, to his intense grief, she died. Her coffin was torn open by the Revolutionary mob, who

insisted that Graham was carrying in it firearms for *les aristocrats*. Graham came back to England filled with hatred of the Revolution and convinced that it was the duty of every Briton to take up arms against it. His first step was to raise the battalion of the Perthshire Volunteers—now the 2nd Scottish Rifles—of which he became honorary colonel. But he was not content to bide at home—although he was forty-four<sup>1</sup> and had neither military rank nor training—so he went out to the Mediterranean as volunteer aide de camp to Admiral Mulgrave, and, knowing Italian and German, was sent on a mission to Würmser's army, and was shut up with that luckless veteran in Mantua. When Würmser wished to send a message to the relieving force under Alvinzi, Graham (*aetat* forty-eight) volunteered for the job and escaped in disguise through the French lines. He afterwards served in Sicily, Minorca, Egypt, and Portugal—everywhere where there was work to do.<sup>2</sup> In defiance of all rules he was at last given substantive rank in the army (in 1808), after sixteen years' service as honorary colonel; in 1810 he was put in command of a British division at Cadiz. His first great exploit was the heroic battle of Barossa. Larpent met him at Wellington's head-quarters early in May, 1813, and described him as a fine old man, but added: "he does not look quite fit for this country work". Larpent was wrong; Graham was, it is true,

<sup>1</sup> Other great soldiers have begun late. Julius Cæsar and Oliver Cromwell began at the same age as Graham.

<sup>2</sup> A charming story is told of him at Toulon; how, when a sortie was being made against the French besiegers, he could find no horse, but, with customary impetuosity, jumped into a cab and hurried to the front in that; and how an affrighted National Guard, seeing this awe-inspiring sight, fled in terror with the words: "Place! Place! Sacré Dieu! On ne fait pas la guerre en cabriolet."

sixty-five, but he had another thirty-one years of life before him yet. He lived to be ninety-six.<sup>1</sup>

To wrap up this plan of moving his left wing under Graham across the Douro and the Esla, Wellington stirred up the Spaniards of the south and kept his right wing under Hill on the move in the Tagus valley. The French were certain to watch Hill narrowly, for he had already grievously surprised them at Arroyo dos Molinos in 1811, and at Almaraz in 1812. So well did Wellington succeed in bewildering the French that each of the French generals was confident that something was intended, but no two of them thought alike. Leval was sure that the attack would come from the Tagus. Reille first expected the whole army on the Esla, but then convinced himself it would come by the Tormes. Gazan thought Salamanca, then guessed right, then changed his mind again and fixed on Tordesillas on the Douro. So all was uncertainty and the French were scattered over a wide front of close on two hundred miles at the very moment when Wellington's onslaught was imminent.

He waited till the green forage was up, and on May 13th Larpent, at head-quarters, saw signs of a move in "the packing of Lord Wellington's claret". The plan was of a threefold advance. Graham, with 40,000 men, was to cross the Douro and make for the lower Esla; Wellington, with the centre, to move from Ciudad

<sup>1</sup> If we put that into our own time we realize better how wonderful it is. Suppose a man of forty-four, happening to be in Germany at the outbreak of the war with a delicate wife who dies there. He returns full of fury against Germany, and fights—as a sort of free-lance volunteer—for the next sixteen years in the Continental war that still goes on. Then at last the army takes him in, with a special commission as brigadier-general, at the age of sixty: he fights for seven years more, rises to be Sir John French's second in command, and eventually dies in 1966.

Rodrigo on Salamanca; Hill to come down the Tormes on the same town; Graham, once across the Esla, would clear the Douro, and the whole army would be concentrated north of that river, *on the French flank*.<sup>1</sup>

Of these operations Graham's was far the most difficult. The *Tras os Montes*, the province north of Douro, is extremely rugged and almost roadless. Graham had to take not only his guns and supplies, but also a pontoon train to bridge the Esla—which in its lower reaches is unfordable. The train would also be useful to ensure Wellington a crossing of the Douro, but it was not absolutely necessary there, as the Douro, though the larger river, is fordable in a good many places. For the deeper, narrower Esla pontoons were essential—but the difficulties of taking them through the mountains were appalling.

Accordingly, about the middle of May, Graham's British cavalry crossed the Douro, some at Oporto and some at Lamego, and plunged into the hills, making for Braganza; a little later the infantry, guns, and pontoon were placed on the right bank, some marching near the river by Torre de Moncorvo, others going by Braganza and Vimioso, and all making for the lower Esla. Wellington's plan was to get him well forward before stirring himself.

On May 20th Hill was moved northwards from Coria in the Tagus valley to Bejar, and Wellington started on the 22nd. Hill came down the Tormes with the Spaniard Morillo on his right, and Wellington moved straight on Salamanca. They met there on the 26th,

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 209.



where the Frenchman Villatte held on too long, and, though his infantry drove off the charges of British horse, a gun overturned in the defile of Aldea Lengua and blocked the road so that seven guns were taken. On the 28th the Allies drew near the Tagus, the centre making for Zamora, the right for Toro. Meanwhile the French had been hastening north; Leval left Madrid on the 27th, and Gazan, Arevalo; Daricau was at Toro, Digeon at Zamora. On the 29th Reille, who had crossed the Esla at Benevente, heard that a big force of Spaniards and British were close by, so he retired again, breaking the bridge at Castro Gonzalo.

Wellington was now growing anxious about his junction with Graham, so he left the command of the centre and right to Hill and went off to Miranda on the Douro, where he crossed the deep chasm, through which the river runs, in one of those primitive baskets slung on a rope—a fine sight his grim nose sticking out over the top must have presented—and met Graham at Carvajales on the 30th. Graham was only a day late—splendid work considering that his men had travelled 150 miles, and some as much as 250 miles, of abominable country. Till now Wellington had been in some doubt about the placing of the pontoon bridge. To secure himself he had made one farther down the Douro, at Espadacinta, but he had purposed to place the other at Barca de Villal Campos, just *below* the confluence of Douro and Esla, so as to have the power of joining Graham there. Now he decided to see Graham over the Esla first; the crossing was made on the 31st, and by June 1st Graham's leading columns were at Zamora. Even though the French had broken

the bridges there and at Toro, the junction with Hill was secure. Having both banks, the bridges could be repaired; besides, the Douro is fordable in places.

The next two days saw a halt in Graham's advance in order to get Hill across the Douro, and to concentrate the army by bringing up Giron's Spaniards from Galicia.



"The Sickle"

Meantime the French were still hustling north, and by June 2nd most had also crossed the Douro,<sup>1</sup> though they had not much more than 35,000 men to oppose Wellington's 75,000, placed "as if by a supernatural power", says Napier, on their flank.

The whole manœuvre has been compared with some aptness to a sweep with a sickle. The point (Graham's

<sup>1</sup> A division was still at Tudela de Douro waiting for a big convoy for Madrid. Other convoys were blocking the roads on the Carrion and the Pisuerga. Wellington might have reached them by pushing on at once. But the evil day for the French was only postponed.

force) inserted far west in the *Tras os Montes*; then the thing urged eastwards till the point came out on the *Esla*. Then the whole is pushed up to the *Douro* and on through the *Tierra del Campos*, the point still leading, reaping in the French as it went.

So the advance was resumed on June 4th, with what Napier calls "conquering violence". Still outflanked by Graham's force on their right, the French gave up the line of the *Carrion* on the 6th, and the *Pisuerga* two days later. From that river Wellington wrote for the ships at *Corunna* to move round to *Santander*, and, if the French were still in possession, to wait at the port. It would not be in French hands long, he was sure. And once they left it he would have a new base and a short line to the sea. The long line of communication stretching back to Portugal and Lisbon would no longer be needed. So once more the command of the sea came in to sway the campaign.<sup>1</sup>

On June 12th Wellington's main force drew near *Burgos*, with Graham still moving through the hilly country to the north. *Burgos* had been the point where he failed in 1812: the castle had defied him; and had it been strongly held it might have hampered him again, even if it did not bring him to a standstill. But it had not been thoroughly repaired, and the French judged that it could not be held. For the moment Wellington suspended his outflanking movement on the left and pushed his right, under Hill, up towards *Burgos*. The French had a chance: Hill was somewhat isolated, and the French

<sup>1</sup> The effect of the command of the sea on the war in the Peninsula is dealt with more fully in the next chapter.

could have gathered enough men to fight him with some hope of winning; but they lost it. Reille tried to make a stand, but he was left without support and had to fall back. On the night of the 12th the French trooped through Burgos. They had mined the castle, which held a mass of siege ammunition, but through some mistake the mines exploded while a column of French infantry were passing beneath the walls and more than 300 men were killed.

The French, now raised to 55,000 men by drawing in men from their lines, retired towards the Ebro—but they were still too few, for Wellington had added to his force Spanish armies from Galicia and the north as he went, and had in all close on 90,000. The direct road on from Burgos was blocked by the narrow defile of Pancorbo, which the French held strongly; so once more the point of the sickle was driven in and the French right again turned by a march up the Ebro. Graham crossed the Ebro at Rocamunde, the rest at Puente Arenas, and Wellington's army now swept down the left bank of the Ebro, once more on the French flank, and drove them off once more eastwards. Turned on the Douro, on the Carrion, on the Pisuerga, and now on the Ebro, if they were turned again it might mean losing their line of retreat to France altogether.<sup>1</sup>

For this is the change that three years had wrought. In 1810 we were considering the roads that might lead the French to Lisbon: on 1813 it is the roads that will bear them out of Spain. In 1810 Wellington had declared that he could, at any rate, defend Portugal—though

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 219.

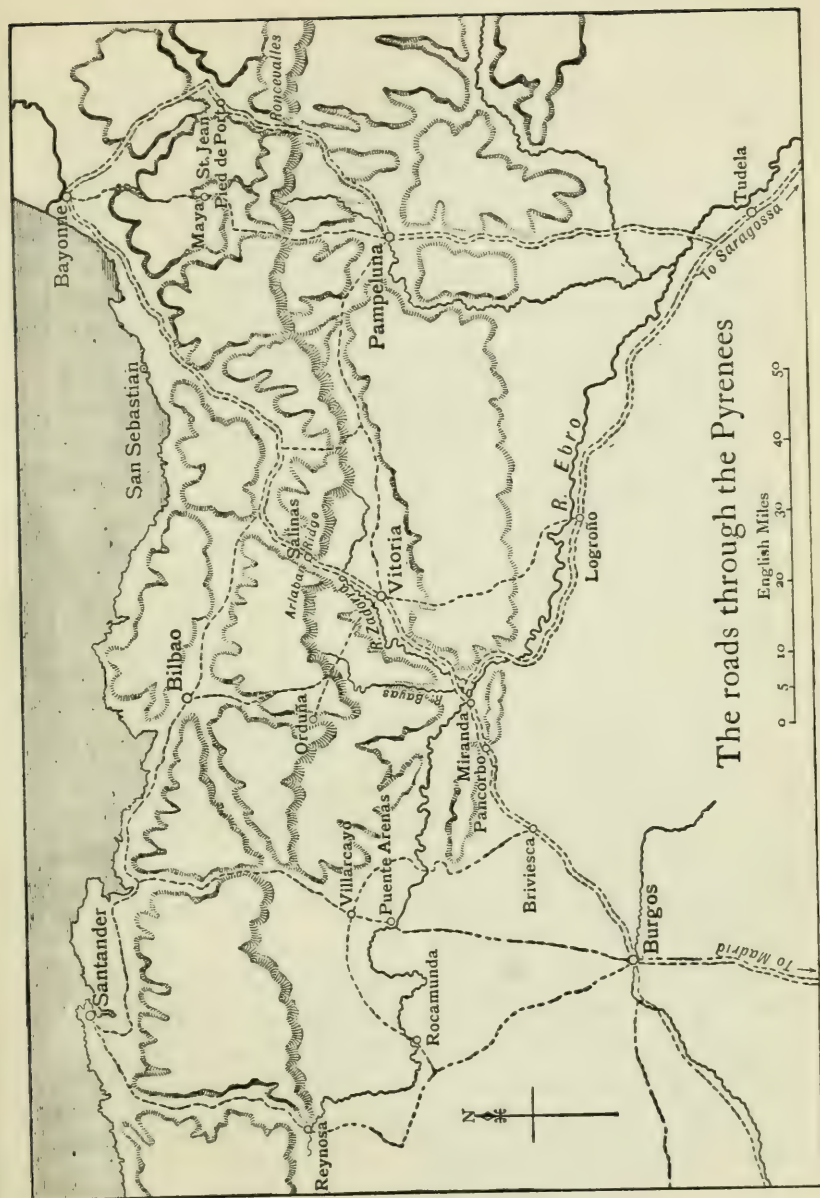
most people in England shook their heads. Three years later he and his allies had driven the enemy to the very gates of the Pyrenees—the mountains lay close at their backs as they were hustled from the Ebro into the upland valley of Vitoria.

Three routes lead from Bayonne into Spain at the western end of the Pyrenees, though it must be remembered that that great chain of mountains does not end at the sea but goes on straight across the north of Spain.<sup>1</sup> These are, first, the road along the coast, the "Royal road", passing St. Sebastian, piercing the mountains, and coming down to Vitoria, thence to Burgos; secondly, the middle (and worst) road which goes past Maya to Pampeluna; and, thirdly, the eastern and most celebrated, which goes through St. Jean Pied de Port also to Pampeluna. It crosses the famous pass of Roncesvalles. But from Vitoria a cross-road—an indifferent one—goes to Pampeluna. Thus, if the French were again turned by their right (the north) at Vitoria, they would *lose their best line of retreat*; if the turning movement went farther, and drove them off the eastern (Pampeluna) cross-road, *they would be cut off from France altogether*, unless they could make their way through Aragon into Catalonia and escape by the eastern end of the Pyrenees. That is the crucial fact to remember about the battle of Vitoria, because the battle is a miniature image of the campaign; one of its main features was a turning of the French right by Graham.

Though Vitoria lies high, close on 2000 feet above sea-level, it is yet in a valley, about ten miles long by

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 219.





eight miles broad. Down the middle of it the Zadorra runs south-westwards on its way to the Ebro.<sup>1</sup> The "Royal road" to Bayonne keeps fairly close to this river, on its eastern side. It enters the valley from the south-west through a narrow pass—the Pass of Puebla—about two miles long, with the heights of Puebla on the east and the heights of Morillos on the west. Then the valley widens out, though its general character is rough, broken, and wooded, especially on the east side, much of the ground being covered with broom and wild lavender. At Vitoria, which is nearly in the centre of the valley, the country is more open. There a number of roads meet. One goes off eastwards to Pampeluna and another more to the south-east to Logrono; another runs northwards to Bilbao and Orduna, while the "Royal road" to Bayonne goes on its way north-eastwards over the Arlaban ridge and the defile of Salinas. On the other side of the ridge that curves round from the Morillos heights and bounds the valley to the north-west lies the Bayas River—roughly parallel to the Zadorra—and a road runs from Subijana de Morillos on the Bayas across the ridge to Nanclares on the Zadorra, and from there to the "Royal road" about four miles short of Vitoria. Each of these roads has a bearing on the battle.

1. The main body of the French, under D'Erlon and Gazan, were hastening back from Miranda on the Ebro by the "Royal road". If the Allies could reach and hold the Puebla Pass they would be cut off. The Allies could only do this by crossing the Bayas at Subijana and getting to the Zadorra at Nanclares.

<sup>1</sup> See map, p. 223.

2. Wellington was actually moving by this Subijana road. But he had Reille in front of him, and that officer held his ground so skilfully, and Wellington's men were so much exhausted by long marches and the difficulty of manhandling the guns over the rocky country by the upper Ebro, that Gazan and D'Erlon were given time to thread the Pass of Puebla on July 19th—not a whit too soon, for Reille was already being driven back from the Bayas. Reille then followed them into the valley of Vitoria by the Subijana road, and Wellington halted on the Bayas—with Graham to his left.

3. By the Logrono road Joseph hoped to draw in Clausel. But Clausel was still thirty miles away and did not come.

4. Similarly, he hoped to get Foy with reinforcements by the Bilbao road; but that officer received his orders too late.

5. His main line of retreat was by the "Royal road" to Bayonne; but, failing that,

6. He might retreat by the cross-road to Pampeluna. This, as we have seen, was an indifferent road.

Joseph and his adviser, Marshal Jourdan, stood to give battle in the Vitoria valley, holding the line of the Zadorra. The weak point of this was that their main line of retreat lay almost parallel to their front, and indeed formed a continuation of it; nor did Joseph make the best of the position: he neglected to break the numerous bridges over the Zadorra. The river is indeed fordable here and there, but in places it is wide and deep; the bridge at Tres Puentes, for example, has seven arches, and, as will be seen, some of Wellington's centre crossed

by it. Yet, though the choice of battle-field was faulty, it is well to bear in mind that it was a choice which Joseph could scarce avoid. He had to stand and fight in order to give time for his baggage to get away. A huge convoy had already gone, another was to start early on June 21st, yet, even so, all the open space round Vitoria was thronged with vehicles and carts loaded with plunder which the French would not abandon—till they were forced. The "Royal road" was equally choked; and in places it ran near the sea and was exposed to attack from it.

Battle was then forced upon Joseph by his own disadvantages and the skill with which Wellington had used them. Still, so far as numbers went, things were not very unequal. The Allies had over 70,000,<sup>1</sup> the French somewhat less; on the other hand, they had 150 guns to the Allies' 90. Since Wellington would have to make the attack, it might be thought that the French had at least as good a chance in the battle as he had.

But what happened on that hot drizzling June 21st showed how changed was the temper of the weapon which Wellington had in hand and how completely he trusted it. He planned an attack with both wings. Hill and Morillo's Spaniards were to force the Puebla heights, clear the pass, and enter the valley from the south. Twelve miles away on the north-west Graham was to work down the Bilbao road and strike at Reille and the French right. When these attacks were well developed, Wellington would come in from Subijana on the French

<sup>1</sup> Giron's 12,000 Spaniards had been detached to the north and did not get to the battle-field.



centre and force the line of the Zadorra. The French would thus be pushed back on Vitoria, Graham would seize the Bayonne road, and the whole of the French force be flung back in retreat by the Pampeluna road.

All this series of converging attacks went off almost



Vitoria

exactly as Wellington planned, and it shows how good a fighting-machine his army had become. Hill, who had four miles to go, Graham, who had close on ten to travel, came into action punctually together; and the Spaniards, at one time so untrustworthy, took a big part in each movement. Morillo's Spaniards climbed the heights of Puebla, Longa's Spaniards worked round on Graham's left to command the Bayonne road. While their left



was being driven in, and their right and line of retreat threatened, Wellington came in with the centre, aiming at the Zadorra between Nanclares and Tres Puentes. A brigade of the Light Division surprised the Tres Puentes bridge, and, once across, were more or less on the flank of their enemy; the French were pushed from the Zadorra to a position resting on Arinez and Lermenda, and from there to the ridge of Armentia just in front of Vitoria. Reille, who fought magnificently, at last had to yield to Graham's attack, and the whole force broke and made off in wild confusion.

Napier describes the last scene at Vitoria: "Many guns were taken as the army advanced, and at six o'clock the French reached the last defensible height, one mile in front of Vitoria. Behind them was the plain in which the city stood, and beyond the city, thousands of carriages and animals and non-combatants, men, women, and children, were crowded together in all the madness of terror, and as the English shot went booming overhead the vast crowd started and swerved with a convulsive movement, while a dull and horrid sound of distress arose; but there was no hope, no stay for army or multitude. It was the wreck of a nation."

It was at any rate the wreck of the French army in Spain. They abandoned every gun but two, all their baggage, all their wagons: even their treasure chests were left, burst open and five million dollars scattered, so that the pursuers tramped over the coin lying scattered on the ground. Marshal Jourdan's *bâton* was taken. King Joseph only escaped capture by leaving his coach and jumping on to a horse belonging to one of his escort,

just as his pursuers came up to the coach on the other side. For six miles the French were pursued, till darkness came down. But Joseph made no real halt. He threw a garrison into Pampeluna and turned to the north, and in a few days Spain was clear of the French armies.<sup>1</sup>

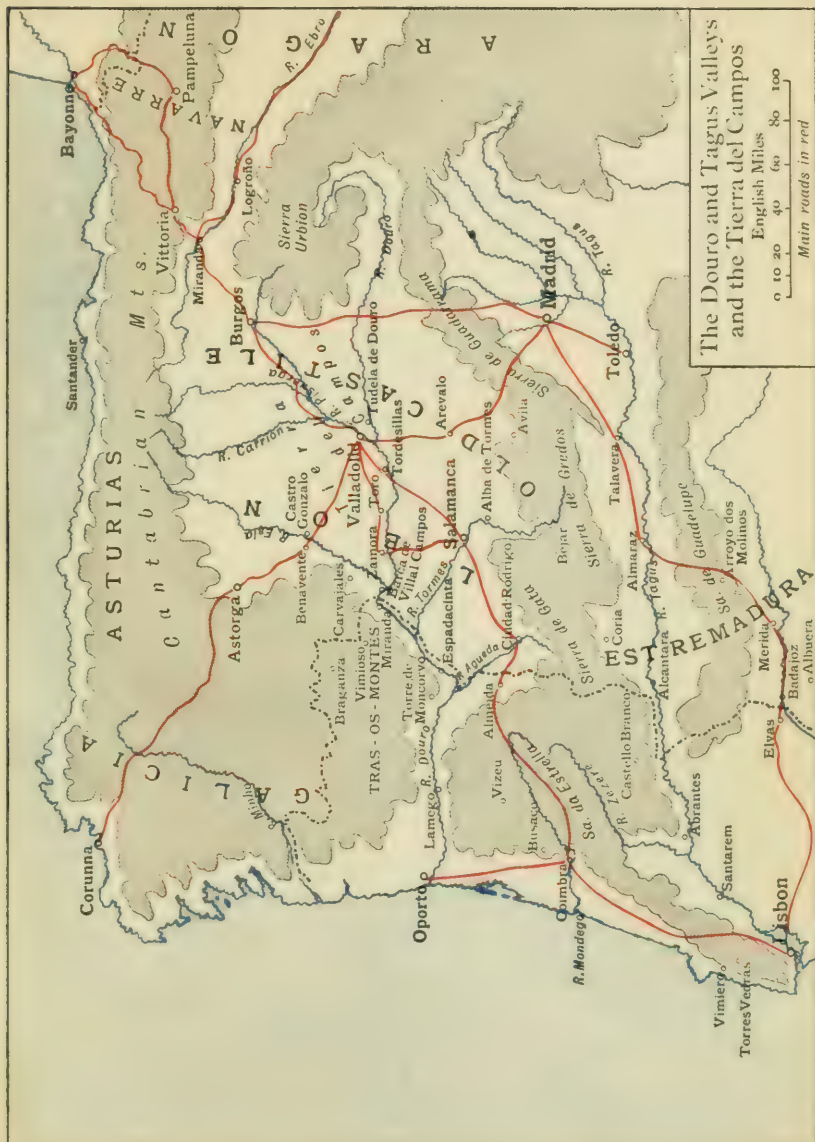
In the early part of the campaign the French had little chance; unless they had discovered Wellington's plan, and managed to attack the right or the left wing before the crossing of the Douro, they were in hopeless case. Even had they tried this they could hardly assemble enough men. Thirty-five thousand was all they had within reach of Escla and Douro, and this was not equal in number to either wing, even when caught by itself. After Graham and Wellington had joined, the French were outflanked and had to fall back. The disparity of numbers continued, because, though the French picked up garrisons and detachments, Wellington got help from Giron's Gallicians and from the local levies of the north. Reille, however, might have made a stand behind Burgos: he was bound to be driven back in the end, but two or three days' delay would have been invaluable to Joseph, who would then have been joined by Clausel and Foy. This would have brought another 20,000 men. Even so, Vitoria was not a well-chosen battle-ground, nor was the best made of it. The pass of Puebla should have been better held and the line of Zadorra better protected. To leave the bridges was folly, though the river could have been forded in places. But Joseph's movements were

<sup>1</sup> The French tried to return, and Wellington had some stiff fighting in the Pyrenees in order to drive them back.

paralysed by his immense train of plunder. This would have choked the "Royal road" in any case, and it is difficult to see how the French could have escaped disaster at Vitoria, unless they won the battle.

It is interesting to compare Wellington and Napoleon's methods. Had Napoleon been in Wellington's place it is likely that the pursuit across Old Castile would have been more hotly pressed: the retreating force would probably have been destroyed in detail. At Vitoria, too, Napoleon would scarcely have contented himself with making his left occupy the Bayonne road. He would have urged a fiercer attack and aimed at getting across the Pampeluna road also. This would have been dangerous, since, if Graham's force had got too far forward, it would have been deprived of support and might have been crushed.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, if it had succeeded, there must have been a huge haul of prisoners. Wellington preferred to run no risk; he particularly bade Graham keep his movements in touch with the rest of the army, telling him to be ready to send help to the centre (*away* from the Bayonne road) if he saw it hard pressed. Thus Wellington made a certainty of victory; Napoleon would probably have tried for an annihilation.

<sup>1</sup> As Vandamme was at Kulm.



## The Douro and Tagus Valleys and the Terra del Campos





## CHAPTER XII

### Sea Power

IN the course of the two campaigns in the Peninsula, which have been followed in some detail, sea power has come in many times. It was the British command of the sea that secured Wellington from an attack by the road past Badajoz. There were only 2000 yards of water at the Lisbon ferry, but the French could no more cross it than they could cross the Channel. It was sea power that covered Wellington's flanks at Torres Vedras and kept his army fed while Masséna's starved. It was sea power that made it possible for Wellington to detach Graham, and to risk being attacked in detail, for whatever happened Graham could retreat to the sea through Galicia. It was sea power that enabled him in 1813 to move Murray's army round from Alicante to Tarragona, and so keep Suchet tied in eastern Spain. Sea power again gave him his new base at Santander in July, 1813, and hampered the French movements on the "Royal road". In the events which we have no more than mentioned sea power was equally conspicuous. It made the landing of the British army possible in 1808; it made Moore's thrust at the Carrion safe, because it gave him freedom from his Lisbon base, and opened the Astorga-Corunna

line to him: once he reached the coast, no matter at what harbour, the fleet could meet him.<sup>1</sup> Sea power secured Cadiz throughout the war, and held a French force busy over its hopeless siege. It gave Caffarelli and Suchet occupation in the north and the east; in 1812, and so left Marmont unsupported for Wellington to destroy at Salamanca. In many ways the command of the sea helped the Allies: their connection with England was secure,<sup>2</sup> reinforcements could reach them easily and without wastage, men could be moved from one base to another, the Spanish levies furnished with British arms and munitions; while, on the other hand, the French were constantly hampered, since they did not know where the enemy would strike, or what base he might choose. Thus they were kept scattered, watching everything, and this separation meant slowness in concentration at the decisive point. The Allies could take the initiative and the French had to follow their choice. In a word we may say that sea power was decisive to this extent, that without it the war could hardly have been undertaken, and but for the help of the sea power—England—the efforts of Spain and Portugal must have failed.

This is clear enough. But it is quite another thing to plunge into hasty generalizations about the value of sea power, and to assert—as so many carelessly do—that “sea power is decisive in war”, or, less widely, “it was sea power that broke Napoleon’s efforts in Spain”. Neither one thing nor the other is nearly true. Trafalgar was

<sup>1</sup> It was late at Corunna, however, and that is one reason why the battle was fought.

<sup>2</sup> How much Wellington depended on the sea can be judged from the fact that even a few American privateers gave him a good deal of trouble in 1813 by intercepting supplies.

fought in 1805, yet the French retained a hold—as good a hold as they ever had—of all Spain till 1812, and of all except the south till 1813. The Allied armies under Wellington had *never lost a battle*, yet every winter saw them back out of Spain. It was only in 1813 that Wellington (so the story runs), crossing the Portuguese frontier, drew his sword, waved it, and said: “Good-bye, Portugal”. Eight years of undisputed command of the sea had done nothing *of itself* to challenge Napoleon’s power in Spain: it was only the British army that made him relax his grip; for the British navy he cared nothing. His power might end at the seashore, but it was equally limited by the shoal water. If he held Spain to the sea, he held Spain; that the ports were blockaded and liable to a bombardment now and again was vexatious but no more. He was not to be shaken off by such trifles.

And if sea power was *of itself* merely vexatious to Napoleon in Spain, in the great campaigns in Germany and Austria it was absolutely impotent. He scarcely gave it a thought. When he marched his army away from the camp at Boulogne towards Ulm he left the guarding of the French coast to a small force of marines; that was enough. What could the navy do against him? It scarcely robbed him of a man or a gun.

A more discerning reading of what history has to teach about sea power in the war is something of this kind. Sea power was enormously valuable in the war in Spain, but it must not be assumed that it will be equally valuable everywhere; and its full value in Spain was only realized when it was applied in the proper way. It was

only after a time that England learnt to make it in any sense decisive. Two questions emerge: in what way was Spain particularly suited to the application of sea power? and what is the proper mode of applying it?

Spain and Portugal form a peninsula, and have a long coast open to attack from a country strong at sea anywhere that it can find a port and make a landing. A further geographical fact repeats this condition in miniature. The snout of Portugal, between the Tagus estuary and the Atlantic, is another peninsula, protected on three sides by water, and therefore singularly defensible by a country strong at sea, and admirably suited as a base. The accident that this miniature peninsula also includes Lisbon increases its strategic value. Thus the first step was easy. The "land animal" could not know where a landing was coming, and would therefore try to protect all vulnerable spots—if indeed it thought it worth while to attempt so hopeless a job as to try to hinder a landing. The "sea animal" could choose its place, strike unexpectedly and with all its weight on one spot.

That, however, is only a small part of the advantages which Spain offered for the use of sea power through its geography. What is still more weighty is that the neck which joins France to Spain is filled by the Pyrenees, and that there were no roads crossing this range in the centre at all. The mountains are so high and so steep on the French side that they form a complete barrier, and the only way to pass it is by turning it at the western end or the eastern end. Thus, although the two countries have about 300 miles of common frontier, the French were practically restricted to two routes into Spain—the "Royal



road", by Bayonne, and the eastern road, by Perpignan. In other words, strategically Spain is a peninsula connected with France only by two very narrow isthmuses. Not only did these lie far apart, and give no chance of co-operation, but they were both liable to interruption from the sea. Particularly on the eastern side the French communications were hampered by the British navy, which could not only shell convoys and troops on their way along the coast, but help to feed, garrison, and supply every seaside fortress in Spanish hands. Yet even had the eastern route been easy it was of little use, because, practically speaking, it does not lead into Spain: it only leads to Catalonia<sup>1</sup> and the eastern coast strip; to go from there into Spain it is necessary to force a way over another range of mountains, and the roads through them are few and bad—even for Spain.

Thus the French invasion of Spain practically hung on one road—the "Royal road". Spain is a geographical bottle with a narrow neck, exposed to attack from the sea, and Joseph Bonaparte's efforts involved a constant struggle to prevent the cork being inserted in the neck.<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to picture any geographical conditions better suited to the "sea animal", England, and more embarrassing to the invading "land animal", France.

Yet this is not all. The Peninsula is mountainous, but mountainous in a remarkable way. It is mainly a high table-land intersected by ranges of mountains; but round its edges lie an almost continuous series of moun-

<sup>1</sup> Catalans do not regard themselves as being Spaniards at all.

<sup>2</sup> I owe this apt comparison to Captain Whitton: "The Vitoria Campaign and its Lessons", *The Journal of the Leinster Regiment*, No. 4, Vol. I.



tains. Save in very few places the strip of coast land under 1000 feet in height is amazingly narrow.<sup>1</sup> It is not often twenty miles wide, frequently not ten miles wide, and for half the coast scarcely five miles wide. Round the north, east, and south coasts the mountain wall is practically continuous. Only one great river—the Ebro—finds an exit through this wall. The tilt of the land drives all the other big rivers westwards. Particularly in the north is the mountain wall high, close to the sea, and unbroken, and the result is that though the Ebro rises within forty miles of one sea (Bay of Biscay), it flows *away from it* on its three-hundred-mile course to the Mediterranean; and the northern tributaries of the Douro—the Esla, the Carrion, and the Pisuerga—all rise close to the Bay of Biscay, but flow away from that sea towards the centre of the country. This geographical fact was of immense military importance to Wellington in 1813 on his march to Vitoria. The essence of his operation was an outflanking movement by his left to the north. The river lines of the Carrion, Pisuerga, the Ebro, were what the French might expect to hold against him. Plainly the farther up a river the easier it will be to cross—but going farther up a river generally means going farther from the sea; the sea was or could be Wellington's base, and it was to his interest to keep within reach of it. Yet observe how the geography of Spain played into his hands. The more he diverged to the left, the easier the rivers would be to cross, and *yet the closer he drew to the*

<sup>1</sup> The only fairly large pieces of comparatively low-lying land (under 500 feet) are (1) around Coimbra; (2) the coast south of Lisbon for 50 miles or so; (3) the strip from the mouth of the Guadiana to Cadiz; (4) the strip from Alicante to Cartagena. A narrow strip also stretches up each of the great rivers.

sea. He had the double advantage. When he started from Ciudad Rodrigo he was about 290 miles<sup>1</sup> from his sea base, Lisbon; he advanced 120 miles *inland* to the neighbourhood of Valladolid, and then was only 230 miles from a new base, Corunna; he advanced again 70 miles to Burgos, and by this time he had opened a third sea base only 80 miles away at Santander; another 60 miles of his advance brought him to Vitoria, and within reach of a fourth sea base Bilbao, this time only 40 miles away. He had marched inland for 250 miles and yet he had shortened his line to his base from 200 miles to 40 miles. So again sea power *and the geography of Spain* served him.

Thus, owing to the geographical conditions of the country, sea power could be enormously valuable to Wellington in Spain—but only so when it was properly used to obtain a decision. And the answer to what is the proper use is plain: *its proper use was to convey, support, and help an army.* Without an army it could do nothing. It was Wellington's army that held Torres Vedras, that penetrated the Tierra del Campos, bringing back the French in hot haste from all quarters of Spain, and that stood triumphant at Vitoria. It was not the facts that Vitoria is forty miles from Bilbao and that the British navy held the command of the sea which hustled the French from Spain: *it was the presence there—close to the neck of the bottle—of an Allied army of over 80,000 men whom the French could not beat. That was the decisive factor.*

How ineffective sea power may be, and how slow

<sup>1</sup> These distances are rough measures as the crow flies. In reality they are all under the actual distance by road.

England was to grasp the true way to use it in order to obtain a decision, is revealed by a brief summary of British efforts in the early years of the war against the Revolution and Napoleon. We may set aside the fighting in India, merely remarking that there a "Sepoy general" was learning his trade and laying things to heart. The rest can be divided into what was done oversea and what was done in Europe. Oversea we had it more or less our own way. We snapped up French and Spanish colonies, especially in the West Indies. We seized on the Cape; later we took Mauritius and even sent an expedition to Java. Mostly we succeeded—now and again, as at Buenos Ayres, we failed. We swept the navies of our enemies off the sea, captured their merchantmen, and destroyed their commerce. But though all these things either secured us from invasion and added to our empire, while they annoyed and inconvenienced the enemy, they decided nothing. If the decision had gone against us in the end we might have retained our gains oversea,<sup>1</sup> but none the less Napoleon would have remained master of Europe. Indeed this policy of concentrating on attacking the enemy's colonies had an ugly look of selfishness about it. In turn we allied ourselves with different Continental States against Napoleon; but though we found money we never provided an army worth mention, or did anything to stave off disaster on the Continent; our allies were beaten and trodden underfoot, while all the time we were adding to our empire and thriving on an enemy's trade.

<sup>1</sup> Though if the war had gone steadily against us Napoleon would have closed Europe to us and we should probably have had to give up some of our captures to secure peace.

In truth our army was from the beginning small, and its efforts wasted in useless diversions. In 1805 Craig was sent with 7000 men to the south of Italy to co-operate with a Russian force: they hardly fired a shot and evacuated Italy again after two months—November 20th, 1805—January, 1806—having done nothing. About the same time Don<sup>1</sup> landed with a force near the Weser to work with Russians and Swedes, but again there was no fighting, and the force re-embarked on February 15th, after three months waste of time. Yet in the October of 1805, while Craig was at Malta waiting for the Russians, came Ulm, and in December, while the British were hesitating on the Weser, came Austerlitz. Austria was laid prostrate and Prussia decided not to make war. Again in July, 1806, Stuart won the fierce action of Maida in South Italy, but the main object, the relief of Gaeta, was not attained. In October we were gathering forces for an attack on Buenos Ayres—where in the summer of 1807 we had some 10,000 men—and failed; but in October, 1806, when we were sending men to South America, came Jena, and in June, 1807, came Friedland and the Treaty of Tilsit,<sup>2</sup> which left Prussia paralysed and removed Russia from our alliance into Napoleon's camp. Our navy could carry troops safely, but they were sent to places where they had no real effect on the war, and they were too few, when scattered in this way, to count. How little sea power had done towards crushing Napoleon by the end of 1807 may be

<sup>1</sup> Don went out first, landing on November 17th. Cathcart took over command on December 15th, 1805.

<sup>2</sup> The Treaty of Tilsit was signed on July 7th, the same day on which Whitelocke was beaten in Buenos Ayres, and was agreeing to evacuate La Plata.



judged by reckoning how much of the coast of Europe was hostile to us. Beginning in the north, Russia was hostile, so was Prussia, and all the North German coast. Denmark was cowed but not friendly. Holland and the Netherlands coast was in French hands; Spain was in alliance with France; Junot had just seized on Portugal; Italy was in French hands (though we had an army in Sicily). In fact, from the Baltic round by the Atlantic and the Mediterranean to the Adriatic there was not one strip of coast friendly to us. And if with the aid of supreme sea power we could not prevail on the sea-coast it is plain we counted for little inland.

Until we possessed an army large enough to be reckoned with, and until we had learnt not to fritter it away in distant, scattered and indecisive operations, however speciously profitable, but to employ it properly against the enemy, sea power, valuable as a defence, had little offensive force in Continental warfare. *Napoleon conquered Europe with armies, and only with armies could he be beaten.* The true use of sea power against him was not merely to hinder his armies coming to invade us; it was to convey soldiers to where they could attack him with the advantages on their side. Then and not till then could the full value of sea power be secured.







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